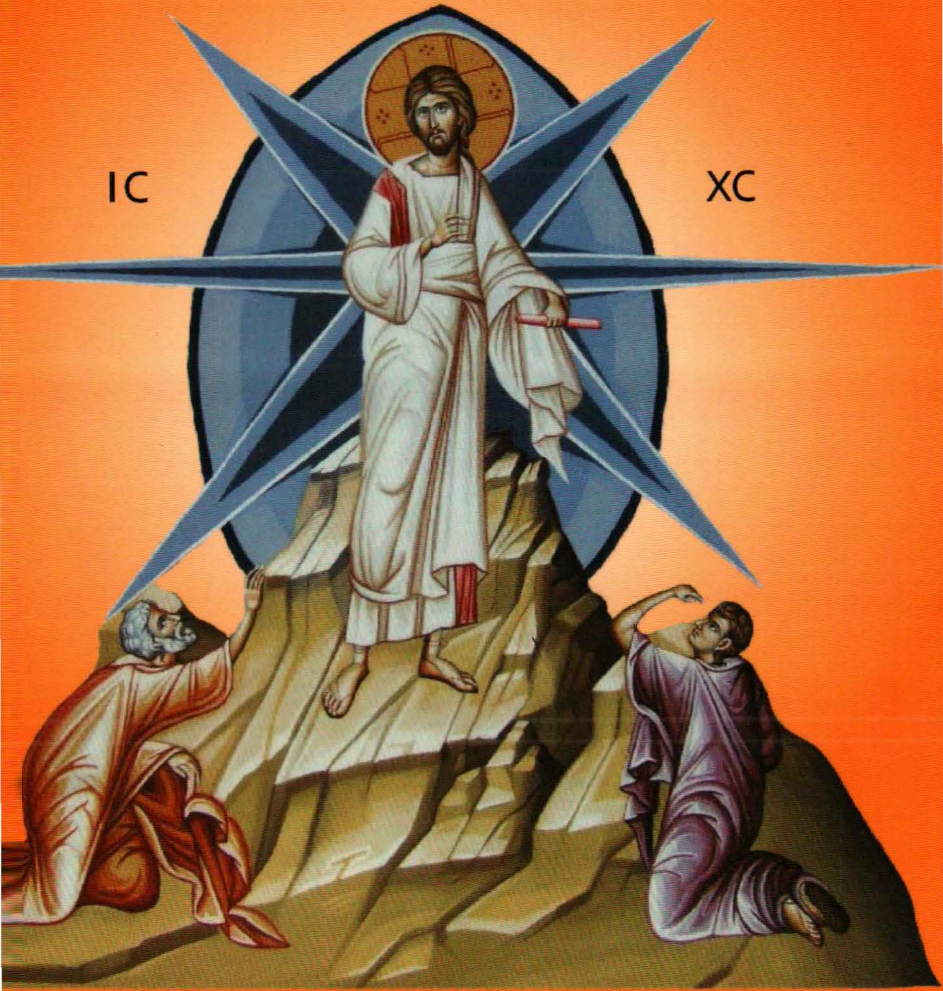
DUMITRU STANILOAE

HE EXPERIENCE OF GOD

ORTHODOX DOGMATIC THEOLOGY



VOLUME 3

THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST
AS GOD AND SAVIOR

THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD

THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD

BY DUMITRU STANILOAE

VOLUME 1. REVELATION AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRIUNE GOD

VOLUME 2. THE WORLD: CREATION AND DEIFICATION

VOLUME 3. THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST AS GOD AND SAVIOR

VOLUME 4. THE CHURCH: COMMUNION IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

VOLUME 5. THE SANCTIFYING MYSTERIES

VOLUME 6. THE FULFILLMENT OF CREATION

Dumitru Staniloae

THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD

Orthodox Dogmatic Theology
Volume 3
THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST AS GOD AND SAVIOR

Translated and Edited by
Ioan Ionita

Foreword by His Beatitude DANIEL
Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church

Introduction by Andrew Louth

HOLY CROSS ORTHODOX PRESS
Brookline, Massachusetts

CONTENTS

Foreword vii

His Beatitude Patriarch DANIEL of Romania

Introduction xi

Andrew Louth

1. The Word of God in Creation and in the Old Testament 1
2. The Gospel Image of Jesus Christ: God and Man 13
3. The Person of the Incarnate Lord in the Faith of the Church 25
4. The Saving Power of the Incarnate Word 43
    - A. The *Kenosis* of the Son of God and the Deification of His Human Nature 43
    - B. The Uniqueness of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos (Mother of God) 60
    - C. The Sinlessness of Christ and His Veneration as God 70
5. The One Work of Salvation: Jesus as Prophet and Teacher 85
6. The One Work of Salvation: Jesus as High Priest and Supreme Sacrifice 103
7. The One Work of Salvation: Jesus as Risen Lord and King 125
    - A. The Resurrection of Christ 127
        - i. The Reality of Christ's Resurrection
        - ii. The Relationship between the Risen Christ and the Historical Plane

        - iii. The Spiritual Irradiation and the Transforming Efficacy of Christ's Resurrection in the World
    - B. The Ascension into Heaven and the Sitting at the Right Hand of the Father 148

Notes 157

FOREWORD

Fr. Dumitru Staniloae is both the "spiritual patriarch" of Romanian theology and a theologian of ecumenical Orthodoxy; his work represents the mirror of his entire personality, a hymn of God's love for humankind and a permanent calling of the human person to the heavenly and eternal life in a world where the obsession for earthly and ephemeral things has become a dominant characteristic of civilization.

If I were to mention just one of the things I experienced in the company of Fr. Staniloae, I would say that he was, first of all, a man of prayer, especially of prayer in extreme situations, prayer that becomes a source of inner freedom when confronted with the oppression of a communist and atheist dictatorship. In this sense, Fr. Staniloae confessed, "In prison I learned how to pray"—namely, to depend on God's help alone. The manner in which he prayed made you notice that he was a holy man: he was overwhelmed by God's presence, and you felt that he was the bearer of a profound and totally spiritual experience of living. Once I saw him saying his evening prayer in a room at the St. Sergius Institute, on the occasion of a theological congress in France. Because he did not have with him his prayer book, the Horologion, after he said the usual beginning prayers Fr. Staniloae prayed freely, profoundly, using simple words that in fact expressed essential petitions: "Lord, help us! Lord, be with us! Lord, forgive us!" When I asked him the next day why such a great theologian prays in such a simple way, he explained, "The greatest temptation for a theologian during prayer is to theologize or to philosophize about God. It is then that he no longer speaks with God but with himself about God, whereas true prayer is personal encounter with God and essential conversation with Him."

Then too, I have seen Fr. Staniloae officiating at the Holy Altar as priest; his manner of serving was simple, humble, timid, and reserved, and when he preached before the faithful, his sermon was very different in style from his books: his phrases were simple, short but concentrated on the essential. He emphasized the love of God for human beings and would often go back to the spiritual force that prayer offers to people. "I have discovered in the writings of the Holy Fathers of the Church that through prayer it is possible to encounter God in a way that is real," Fr. Staniloae said.

I also appreciated very much the manner in which Fr. Staniloae brought together, both in his theology and in his way of being, love for the Romanian people with love for *Orthodoxy in its universality and sobornicity*. In Fr. Staniloae's perception, just as human persons have a face, a name, and a unique way of being, so too do peoples have a precise identity and a specific vocation. Both individual persons and entire peoples manifest their normal existence and their plenary vocation *only in communion*. In this way, there is affirmed within humanity the blessing of the communion of the Holy Trinity, because humanity is created in the image of the Holy Trinity: "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness" (Gen 1:26).

In his theology Fr. Staniloae finds himself in dialogue over time with the theology of the Holy Apostles, of the Ecumenical Councils, and of the Holy Fathers, but also in dialogue in our own time with Greek, Russian, Serbian, Arab, and Western Orthodox theology, yet without ignoring contemporary Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant theology. His fidelity for the Orthodox tradition is not rigid, static, or fanatic, but it is a *renewed fidelity*—dynamic, creative of communion, and bearing light for all who believe in Christ and love Him as God and Savior. At the same time, his opening of himself to the entire Orthodox world and to the ecumenical reality is not simply an accommodation to the trend of the day, nor is it a circumstantial diplomacy, but a *confession of truth in love*, even when his love takes the tone of a critical attitude toward a certain type of Orthodox theology that is too scholastic or leans toward certain contemporary individualistic or secularized theologies.

Today, the work of Fr. Dumitru Staniloae is so much more important in the ecumenical field inasmuch as its central, consistent, and persistent message is that of the love of God for human beings. In the state of divine-human communion, the ephemeral, earthly realities join together with the heavenly and eternal ones, and communicate among themselves. In this sense, the theology of Fr. Staniloae is a call to dialogue and communion between persons and peoples, on the basis of Christ's love for the entire creation and for humanity as a whole.

At once traditional and creative, Fr. Staniloae's thinking could be defined in the following way: *an ecclesial, confessing theology, a philosophy of holiness* and *a cosmic vision of salvation in Christ*. Fr. Dumitru Staniloae is and remains in our consciousness, and especially in the consciousness of those of us who knew him personally, a *confessor theologian* who, during the time of Communist persecution, had confessed that through his living faith in God—the Creator of the universe and of humanity—the human person is able to cultivate his dignity as creative being and friend of God, and that Jesus Christ, the God-Man, assures the eternal affirmation of man within the love and eternal glory of the Holy Trinity. Fr. Staniloae enriched Christian love in its vocation to seek and cultivate this communion with God. Therefore, *his thinking is not self-sufficient wisdom, but a transcendental aspiration to holiness, to sacred and eternal communion*, which presupposes not just the possible existence of God, but the living and loving presence of God in the life of the human person and the advancement of the human person within the eternal love of God. The work of Fr. Staniloae shows us that he was at one and the same time preoccupied with the sanctification of both the human person and the entire creation. In Romanian theology, no one before him had elaborated a *Christian theology of creation* so rich and profound as did Fr. Dumitru Staniloae. In his entire theology it is clear that he had rediscovered in the writings of the Holy Scripture and of the Holy Fathers deep sources for a creative and dynamic theology. Fr. Staniloae had studied attentively and had explained profoundly the works of the Fathers of the Church, which he continued creatively, himself becoming in a way a Church Father in the twentieth century.

Fr. Dumitru Staniloae remains over time a theologian of the love and light of the Holy Trinity, that is, a flame of the Resurrection, a spirit bearing in itself a permanent actuality proper to the saints of Christ's Church.

The present volume dealing with Christology is a happy testimony to the manner in which Fr. Staniloae affirms the dynamic aspect of Orthodox tradition and the missionary vocation of theology as a science of salvation and of eternal life. I congratulate Fr. Ioan Ionita for translating into the English language this volume, the third in a series of six volumes under the general title *The Experience of God* that comprise the entire *Dogmatics* of Fr. Staniloae. Because Fr. Ionita and I were students together and disciples of Fr. Dumitru Staniloae during our doctoral studies at the University Theological Institute in Bucharest (1974–77), it seemed fitting to give common testimony to the light of divine grace active in the life and work of this great confessor theologian of the twentieth century.

+ DANIEL
Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church

INTRODUCTION

In this, the third volume of *The Experience of God*, Fr. Dumitru Staniloae's *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (the third half-volume of the Romanian original), we find his treatment of Christology, of the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is very much the heart of the work, for the Lord stands at the heart of Fr. Dumitru's theology. At first sight, it seems a very traditional treatment—biblical witness of both the Old and New Testaments, the patristic witness, the theology of the Incarnation, and then a treatment of Christ's work as Prophet, Priest, and King—but the traditional structure (doubtless, my Romanian friends have told me, required by the Communist censors, who had permitted the replacement by Fr. Staniloae of older textbooks of dogmatics) disguises an account of Christ that, though certainly deeply traditional and Orthodox, is challenging and even revolutionary in its approach. This emerges from the very first pages, in which Fr. Staniloae gives a reprise of the doctrine of the presence of the Logos of God in creation through the inner principles, or *logoi*. This doctrine of the *logoi* of creation, developed in patristic times especially by St. Maximus the Confessor, formed an important part of the doctrine of creation as presented by Fr. Staniloae in earlier parts of *The Experience of God*. Here it is used to set the whole treatment of Christology in a cosmic context, so that from the very beginning creation and redemption are held together. Furthermore, in a way quite typical of Fr. Staniloae, the doctrine of the *logoi* of creation, although developed in close dependence on St. Maximus, is related to Karl Rahner's notion of a "transcendental Christology," rooted in the ontological conditions of the created order. Furthermore, this provides a bridge to the other principal theme of the first chapter: Christ as the fulfillment of the hopes of Israel, and indeed of the aspirations of the whole of humanity. In Fr. Staniloae we find a veritable "scribe of the kingdom of heaven," who "brings out of his treasure things new and old" (Matt 13:52). This characteristic runs through this volume. Fr. Staniloae draws on his deep knowledge of the Fathers, especially St. Maximus the Confessor, but also St. Cyril of Alexandria, Leontius of Byzantium, St. Nicholas Cabasilas, and St. Gregory Palamas, as well as on modern theologians—fellow Orthodox theologians such as Panayiotis Nellas, Western theologians such as Hans Urs von Balthasar and Karl Rahner, and Western biblical scholars with names little known nowadays—often enough. Fr. Staniloae's Orthodoxy was an open-minded Orthodoxy, rooted in the Tradition, yet able to draw on insights in a thoroughly ecumenical way. Frequently his critical engagement with his Western contemporaries takes the discussion initiated by his Western partner on to a deeper level of understanding; this seems to me especially true of his rethinking of Hans Urs von Balthasar's "Theology of the Three Days"—of the Paschal *Triduum*—where Balthasar's approach is developed and corrected in the light of an understanding of the *Triduum* drawn from the Orthodox liturgical texts. Here is revealed another feature of this volume, which will become even more marked in the later volumes: Fr. Staniloae's use of the liturgical texts as a theological resource.

What are the most striking features of Fr. Staniloae's presentation of Christology in this volume? First of all, as already mentioned, there is the stress from the very beginning on the cosmic dimension of Christology; in this, he follows the example of St. Athanasius, who, at the beginning of his work *On the Incarnation*, remarks that in discussing the Incarnation, "we must first speak about the creation of the universe and its creator, God, so that in this way it may be considered as fitting that its renewal was effected by the Word who created it in the beginning" (*De Incarnatione* 1). Secondly, there is Fr. Staniloae's engagement with the biblical and historical issues. The problems raised by modern critical scholarship concerning the value of the biblical evidence about Jesus Christ, and especially about His Resurrection from the dead, are not glossed over, but confronted in a robust and equally critical way. In this he draws on Western critical scholarship but is also well aware of the philosophical presuppositions that often unwittingly predetermine the supposedly objective results of scholarship. Fr. Staniloae's discussion here is philosophically informed and often makes for very demanding reading. Thirdly, we find creative and fruitful reflection on some of the most technical Christological language of the Fathers. This is especially true of his reading of Leontius of Byzantium's contribution to Christology. Like very many twentieth-century scholars, Fr. Staniloae accepts without question the notion, introduced into scholarship by the German scholar Loofs, of "enhypostasia," the idea that the human nature of Christ was "enhypostasized" by the divine Logos. More recent patristic scholarship has called this notion into question, and it is interesting to wonder how Fr. Staniloae would have responded to this development. However, at the heart of the notion of enhypostasia is the truth, recognized by all the later Orthodox or Chalcedonian theologians, that the Hypostasis of the incarnate Christ was the divine Logos: the Hypostasis, the concrete particular reality, of the human nature of Christ was none other than the divine Logos, the Second Person of the Trinity. In his reflection on this, Fr. Staniloae develops a profound understanding of what human nature must be if this is to be possible. (In this development there are reminiscences of some of Karl Rahner's reflections, as found in the early volumes of *Theological Investigations*, though there are no explicit references.) The Incarnation of the Word of God establishes a state of affairs in which what it is to be human is transformed. So we find the following reflections in Fr. Staniloae's consideration of human nature in the light of the Incarnation:

> If person alone is the irradiating center of life and of spiritual warmth that unifies, then the irradiating center of a loving life and of a unifying, endless force unscathed by any shadow of egoism cannot but be a divine Person who entered into a direct relationship with us as a human person fulfilled in the highest degree...
>
> Only the human spirit is a window or a door through which nature enters the plane of infinitude and divine freedom. It is only through the human being as a person that the supreme Personal reality can descend spiritually to the order of created nature in order to fully integrate it into the human person and through this into personal divinity. That is why the entire visible

> creation, unified in the incarnate Word, is concentrated in two natures: the divine nature and the human nature. . .
>
> As in the human being the body is integrated with the horizon and freedom of the human spirit without being annulled, but rather fulfilled, in its purpose, so in Christ the infinite horizon of the divine life and the possibilities of divine freedom are opened for the human nature without being annulled, but rather fulfilled, in its aspiration. It is toward this horizon that every human being tends and, in a certain way, partakes of through a relationship with the incarnate Logos. In Christ this horizon is opened for the human nature not through the relationship with the Logos as a relationship with another person, but in the unity of the divine-human Person, of which human nature is also a part. And Christ communicates this horizon to us in a more direct way by the fact that the Logos is now in a direct relationship with us, a relationship in which we are with our fellow human beings.

This is not unlike what Maritain called a "true humanism," in which the human finds its fulfillment in the opening up of horizons that the merely human could not envisage. It is along these lines that Fr. Staniloae makes plain that it is only in deification that the human can find its true destiny.

This example gives a glimpse of the richness of Fr. Staniloae's reflection on Christ. This richness is found throughout. Even in his discussion of the dogmatic understanding of Christ as a divine Person uniting divine and human natures, we see that reflection on this moves seamlessly to reflection on what this opens up for human nature. There is no separation of the "Person" and "work" of Christ: to understand the Person is to understand the transformation he has brought about. But as he moves on to consider the traditional themes of the work and power of Christ we find densely illuminating discussion of the self-emptying of the Son of God—His *kenosis*—and the deification of His human nature (and ours), seen as two sides, as it were, of a single coin, very much in the manner of St. Maximus; of Christ's sinlessness and its relationship to His divinity; and between them a discussion of the place of the Virgin Mary—the Mother of God, or Theotokos. This leads into a discussion of the efficacy of Christ's work, in which Fr. Staniloae takes as his template the doctrine—introduced, in express form, into Christian theology by the reformer John Calvin—of Christ as Prophet (and Teacher), Priest (and Sacrifice), and King (and risen Lord). There are many delights in these pages, but let me just mention two. First of all, the detailed discussion of Christ's priesthood and sacrifice. For this, Fr. Staniloae draws mostly on the thought of St. Cyril of Alexandria, whose uncle and predecessor in the see of Alexandria, Theophilus, was the source of the words that find their way into the prayer of the Cherubic Hymn in the Divine Liturgy, and on which Cyril had himself meditated deeply: "For you are the one who offers and is offered, who receives and is distributed, Christ our God. . ." Fr. Staniloae's treatment of the Eucharistic sacrifice belongs to a later section of this work, but here we find its Christological foundation. Secondly, running through the discussions of Christ as priest and king, as sacrifice and risen Lord, there is a kind of expansion of von Balthasar's "Theology of the Three Days," an expansion that takes in Christ's self-offering and death (Gethsemane and Golgotha), His Descent into Hell, His Resurrection from the dead, and His Ascension into Heaven and Session at the Father's Right Hand. This roots a discussion that might otherwise be somewhat abstract in a contemplation of the dying and rising Lord. This is truly, as Henri de Lubac said of Balthasar's theology, a "theology on one's knees," a theology informed by and informing our devotion to Christ.

Fr. Staniloae's theology is exciting; it is also demanding. In his anxiety to miss nothing of the richness he has to enfold, his prose is often dense, his sentences overloaded. It is an enormous challenge to any translator, and Fr. Ioan Ionita has risen nobly to the challenge. He does not seek to disguise the difficulties of Fr. Staniloae's exposition, but you may be sure that what makes such demands of the reader, also offers rich rewards.

Andrew Louth

CHAPTER ONE

THE WORD OF GOD IN CREATION AND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Logos, or the Word of God, was in the world since its inception, on one hand through the reasons/inner principles of things, which are created images sustained by God's eternal reasons, and on the other hand through human persons who, in their living rationality, are the images of the Word of God's own Hypostasis. They were created in order to think the reasons of things through together and in dialogue with the divine Personal reason.

The divine reasons are not only meanings of the divine Logos's infinitely deep richness, but they are also rays of divine life and power which radiate from the ocean of life and power that is hypostasized in the Son and Word of God as well as in the Father and the Holy Spirit. Created things, too, as rational images of these rays radiating from them, are therefore units of power and life. Their ultimate substratum is the energy which has in itself a meaning or a complexity of meanings. This energy includes in itself the tendencies of certain indefinite interferences, which produce those units that are connected among them. Created things are the created images of the divine reasons given material form, images filled with power and carried by the tendency of innumerable references among themselves. In the state of these images given material form are reflected the meaning, the power, and the life of the divine reasons in their unity, which comes from the divine Logos.

Whereas things as materialized images of the divine reasons are created through the commanding words of the divine Logos, who bestows upon these materialized images the character of rational units that are thought through and are proper to objects, the human person—implying in himself all human persons—is called into existence as a created partner of the Word of the Personal God and as His image, so that in his nature as subject the human person may also think the objective reasons of things together with the Word of God, who is the person's original thinking subject. Human persons are thus placed in a special, dialogical relation with the Person of the Word and with the persons of their neighbors. Every human person is a thinking word in a dialogue with the Personal, divine Word and with the other human, personal words. Each human person absorbs power from the divine Word and also from the power of things as he gathers reasons in his thought as well as their power in his life. As he communicates these reasons to others, he receives from them their communication, and thus he deepens both his relation with the divine Logos and his understanding of their origin and meaning. By creating things as rational images of His reasons for created persons as images of His Person, who is in relation with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Word addressed to human beings these things as rational words given material form. What the material form is for the reasons of the Logos or for the images of these reasons, this is what the human person's body is for the human subject created as the image of the Logos's Person. The human subject is invited to a conscious, spiritual, and material life in communion with the Logos; he is invited to gather within himself all the created reasons given material form in order for him to share a content of thought and life in common with the divine Logos.

Human persons were called by the divine Logos to communion with Himself through the world of created things. In this regard St. Maximus the Confessor says,

> By hiding Himself mystically in reasons, the Word offers Himself proportionally for understanding through each of the visible things as through letters, whole and complete in everything, whole and undiminished; He who is undifferentiated and always the same in those that are differentiated, He who is simple and uncomposed in those that are composed, He who is without beginning in those subjected to a beginning, He who is unseen in those that are seen, He who is impalpable in those that are palpable . . . so that in all these He may gather us all—those who

> follow Him—in Himself, uniting us through the Spirit in order to raise us to the simple understanding of Him, an understanding that is freed from the attachment to things, by concentrating us for Him in union with Him as much as He differentiated Himself through His coming down for us.[1]

Only as Person can the Logos be understood as the One, as unseen, as He who makes Himself entirely known to us through any reason given material form or any word of His and through all reasons put together, because not one can stand by itself. Only inasmuch as we are comprehending subjects can the Logos reveal Himself entirely to us as Person through the agency of each of these images of His reasons and through all of them put together. The rationality of created things implies a creative Person who thought and continues to think them. Moreover, any rationality is an interpersonal rationality. As for the world, there is a primordial Person who thinks and creates things, and there are other persons to whom they are addressed in order to be thought in communion. Their being thought by us means that we, as thinking subjects, are in the image of the Word, who thought and created them for a dialogue with us. The human subject is the personal, thinking reason created in connection with things thought by the divine Logos before He created them. The Logos creates not only objects that are thought, but also subjects brought into existence in His own image so that they, together with Him, may think the created things. Our placement in this relationship coincides with our bringing into existence. One can say that this bringing of ours into existence coincides with our response to God's call even if, in the beginning, we do not realize this, or even if we never realize this. We move toward existence on the basis of our being called to existence on the part of the Word. When we come into existence, we come toward the Word, the only one who truly exists, and are attracted by Him out of nothing. We come, however, not as objects, but as subjects for whom this attraction into existence is at the same time a call to an eternal dialogue with Him. By this the Word gives Himself a created *alter ego*, or a multitude of *alter egos*. He gives consistency to a subject who is a sort of thought-and-created projection of His own self.

If we are able to know and think the created things through, it is because they are created images given material form of a supreme Personal reason. If we can express them in words, it is because they are words given material form of the Word, words that are addressed to us at our level. We think and speak rationally because we are partners of the Person who Himself is the Personal Word and who has placed before us, with a creative power we do not have, His thought, or the created image of His thought given material form, at the level of our reason and created ability to express ourselves. We feel driven to gather within us the reasons of created things and to express them because through them we attain our fulfillment, and because they are addressed to us as means for our dialogue with the Word of God and for our growth in communion with Him. It is impossible to conceive that this expressible rationality of reality does not have a subject who thought and expressed it by creating it and who continues to think and to express it in a continuously new flexibility for the subjects created in His image. It is impossible to conceive that these subjects were not expressed as rational thoughts given material form for other persons created with this purpose in view. The supreme Subject gave materialized expression to His thoughts at our level, as subjects created by Him in His image. He created these subjects for our sake so that we may realize harmony with Him and among ourselves as we think and express them together with Him and within our common thought. This accord implies in itself the meaning of love. In our view, if the world did not have its origin in a supreme Personal reality and, furthermore, if the world were not understood for the purpose of our dialogue and accord with it, then the entire rationality of creation would be unintelligible; it would be a meaningless fragmented rationality, a rationality that would move around in darkness.

Both the dialogue and the accord exist in a continuous development. We have a more complete understanding of created things and of the goal the supreme Personal reality is reaching for through them. The supreme Personal reality increasingly reveals the meanings hidden within created things and makes them flexible by combining them through providence within new connections and circumstances in collaboration with us. These circumstances and combinations constitute just as many increased assertions addressed to our understanding and behavior before the supreme Personal reality and among ourselves, just as many occasions for the manifestation of our love for God and for each other, occasions which correspond with the new manifestations of His love for us.

This dialogue and the ever-increasing accord are not meant to be purely intellectual, but a dialogue and an accord in a more complete love, given the fact that human subjects receive through created things from their Creator and Provider not only meanings, but also vital goods, both material and spiritual. By processing created things and through their behavior toward God and their fellow human beings in various circumstances, created subjects receive from God and from their fellow human subjects—and in their turn offer—not only revelations of new meanings in created things, but also the accommodation of those meanings to their own needs. It is in this way that we advance in the communion with God and with our neighbors. Created things cannot be used and understood unless they are processed and deciphered in a common collaboration imposed by circumstances. In this collaboration the guiding, thinking, and propounding operation of the Word of God is also present. Thus all human persons cooperate in the adaptation of created things and of circumstances to their own higher needs, to a deeper and more articulated deciphering of their meanings and, furthermore, to the enrichment of their language and by this to their own spiritual enrichment. Human beings speak about created things and circumstances, about their need for them and about mutual help, because they need to give and receive this help—both physical and spiritual—in an ever-increasing communion of love, that is, in a spiritual growth for all. This whole dialogue is practical and intellectual at the same time; it promotes love and opens up the meanings of created things and of their existence as gifts of the supreme Personal reality. In all this the human being deciphers certain just laws of life as God's laws, to which he conforms himself.

In one way, the divine Word communicates—through creation and its development, guided by providence—ever-new meanings and norms or words. In another way, He communicates Himself with His loving attention so as to lead human beings to a constantly deeper and articulated knowledge of Him and also to an ever-increasing conformation and communion with Himself.

But because of reasons of pride humans fell, by means of created things, from the perception of the creative, provident Person. They no longer wanted to perceive created things either as images of the reasons of the thinking, supreme Personal reality or as words of His love. They began to consider created things as reasons in themselves, believing that in this way they could understand and manipulate them until the end in a completely autonomous manner, thus becoming like God. In doing this, they broke the living relationship with the Word as Person through all created things and circumstances as images of His reasons and words. The human person found himself alone before a world of objects that was closed up for him in a meaningless "rationality" or in a rationality with a meaning that is limited exclusively to life on earth with no extension into eternity; he has found himself outside the relationship with the supreme Personal reality, who gives meaning to the reasons of created things, meaning and life to human persons created by Him, and a continuous newness; he has further found himself before a world subjected to certain processes of uniform repetition in the continuous making and unmaking of its units, which means death for the individual human person. Because the reason left in the human being and the rationality left in created things no longer had in themselves the transparence of the divine Logos, the human person no longer found in these a help against irrational tendencies and the passions produced by them. Objectively speaking, the divine Personal Logos continues to manifest His presence through the human person's reason as well as through the reasons of created things. That is why a good number of ancient philosophers reached the idea of a unique god—the Stoics also reached the idea of His presence in the world through "seminal reasons"—and of a serious morality based on reason. The Eastern Church was later to honor these philosophers as external prophets and to paint their portraits on the exterior walls of certain monasteries and church buildings. Also, many among the pagans fulfilled God's law naturally because it was "written in their hearts" (Rom 2:15) as a natural law, following the path of the realization of their true humanity.

Most human beings, not having drawn from the existence of their reason and the reasons in the world the logical deduction of the Person who first thought and created them, have fallen into all kinds of vain imaginations and disgraceful passions. Therefore they brought upon themselves an even greater damnation, because they could not justify themselves due to the lack of certain signs of God's presence in them and in the world. St. Paul the Apostle rightly wrote, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened . . . Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanliness, in the lusts of their hearts" (Rom 1:18–21, 24). The objective continuation of the divine Word's presence in the world as well as the darkness that had enveloped the subjective hearts of human beings are affirmed by St. John the Evangelist in the words, "And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:5).

From an objective point of view, the relation of the Logos as Person with human reason and with the reasons of created things has not remained as strong as it was in the beginning because human reason has weakened its relation with the supreme Personal Logos. This weakening of the power and the relation the Logos has with the reasons of created things and with the human body has led to the weakening of the combined unity of those reasons and, consequently, to the corruptibility of created things and of bodies, and to their decomposition (Rom 8:21–24).

The presence of the divine Logos in the world even in its weakened degree after the Fall could form a larger basis for what the Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner calls "transcendental Christology," that is, a need for Christ inscribed in the spiritual constitution of the human being. The elements in which he sees this "transcendental Christology" can be considered as the special form of the Logos's presence within the human spirit and, as such, they can be incorporated into His general presence in the world, which we outlined above. We will enumerate these elements which are part of the reason itself as the Logos's image. We should first mention that Rahner himself sees this "transcendental Christology," or Christology of expectation, as being fulfilled in the correspondence between the Person of the historical Christ and His work. It is a "theology of conscience," that is, an "ontic Christology" inscribed in existence, an "ontological Christology" in which the historically tested Christology that was preached is in accord with rationality, or with the human person's need for meaning.

(a) The first element of this "transcendental Christology" of the Logos is seen by Rahner in the human being's need for absolute love, which is a response to Christ's commandment to see Christ Himself in the neighbor (Matt 25). According to this commandment, "an absolute love, which is radically and without reservation directed toward a human being, implicitly affirms Christ through faith and love. And this is true. For the simple man, finite and unstable, cannot fully justify by him and for him alone the absolute love being offered to him, love in which a person courageously engages himself in total dedication to the other. The other could be loved with reservations, with a kind of love in which he who loves either keeps it to himself or has the courage to offer himself in an absolute way to a reality which may be meaningless . . . Love, however, wishes to be in a union between love of God and of neighbor wherein the love of neighbor is concomitantly the love of God and thus is absolute. By this it seeks the God-Man: the One who can be loved as man with the absolute love of God."

(b) The second element of this latent Christology in the human being is seen by Rahner in understanding death in a sense that he sees fulfilled in Jesus's death. "Death is an act wherein the whole life is fulfilled, wherein the human person as a free being disposes of himself as a whole in such a way as to accept an absolute disposition of his being in his radical helplessness, which appears to be and is in fact suffered in death. If this free acceptance, open to a radical helplessness whereby the human being who disposes of himself accepts to dispose of himself, does not mean the acceptance of something absurd, which, in such a case, could be 'rightly' rejected through protest, this acceptance implies in man—who does not affirm abstract ideas and norms, but reality as the foundation of his historical existence—the expectation or affirmation through intuition of death in which the dialectic between action and helpless suffering toward death is reconciled." This reconciliation is achieved in Christ and through Him for us, too.

(c) The third element is the hope for the future. The human being hopes and makes plans but is also exposed to the unforeseeable future. "The human being's advance into the future is a constant struggle to diminish his inner alienations as well as the distance between what he is and what he really wants and should be. We have to be content, therefore, with the satisfaction (individually or collectively) of an eternally distant goal, always unevenly followed and which keeps moving further, or this absolute goal is an attainable one which, once attained, does not suppress the finite by making it disappear in the absoluteness of God. The human being who has real hope must hope that these questions must be answered in the second alternative, through historical reality."[2]

The Holy Fathers formulated in a simpler way this unconscious expectation and this fulfillment of the human person in Christ, stating that he was created for Christ, or rather that the human person's divine image is perfected in Christ.

So that human beings would not be left in this unattainable expectation, the Word of God has made felt even more His presence and Personal action in relation to them, through the revelation in the Old Testament, thus preparing them through that revelation for His future Personal presence, fully clear and near in Christ—the incarnate Word and Son of God. The divine Word's presence, through the reasons or words of created things and through the direct words and deeds in the Old Testament as well as His Incarnation, occurred in a progressive line as each of the previous ones prepares the one that follows, while the one that follows makes the previous one more evident.

God the Word made His presence and activity in the Old Testament clearer and more efficient through direct words whispered into the hearts of prophets and through deeds more distinguishable as His own deeds than the natural events and circumstances that could have been interpreted as occurring without a Personal God. The patriarchs and the prophets experienced the Word of God's direct presence in words communicated to them and in activities performed with them and with the people of Israel, although this presence was not that of a person entering the community of human persons. Human persons found themselves face to face with the Person who addressed them in words and announced His actions. They entered into a direct relation with Him as Person, but not as an incarnate Person who ontologically descended among humans. The Person of the Word still remained above humans, even though He made His Personal nature and the interest He had in human persons, as well as His relationship with them, strongly felt. This is the reason why His words are powerful and have the warmth of Personal communication as well as the force that compels humans to stop doing what is against His will and supports them in fulfilling His will, a force that sustains at the same time their reason/inner principle because it is itself rational. St. Maximus the Confessor saw a fundamental identity between the Logos's presence through created things and through human reason, and His presence in the Old Testament.[3] The words and Personal actions that are clearer in the Old Testament do not contradict those found in nature (or in natural revelation) but, on the contrary, they bring the latter to light as being God's words and actions and fulfill the same purpose: a progress toward an ever-deepening communion with God. Thus, in the light of the more direct utterance and action of God's Word in the Old Testament, the psalmist sees more clearly the very order in nature as God's words and actions:

> The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech [about God], and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language whose voice is not heard . . . In the sun He has placed His dwelling. (Ps 18:1–3, 5)

Regarding the presence and work of the Word in the Old Testament as preparation for His Incarnation, St. Maximus the Confessor says, "Before his visible and fleshly appearance the Word of God dwelt spiritually with the patriarchs and prophets prefiguring the mysteries of his coming" and, "The understanding of the Law and the Prophets as precursors of the coming of the Word in the flesh instructed the souls about Christ."[4]

The Word makes His presence more sensible in the Old Testament directly not only through words, but also through acts, through types established by Him, and through a power in which was felt something of the grace that would irradiate fully from Him after His Incarnation and Resurrection. St. Maximus also says, "God, who in his mercy for us has desired that the grace of divine virtue be sent down from heaven to those who are on earth, has symbolically built the sacred tent and everything in it as a representation, figure, and imitation of Wisdom. The grace of the New Testament is mysteriously hidden in the letter of the Old."[5] Certainly, the tent of the Old Testament was a symbol not only in the intellectual sense of the word, but also in the sense of a recipient of something from the heavenly tent or the Personal, divine Word who, through Incarnation, would bring all His power into the human body—His true tent—and, consequently, into His direct relation with human beings. St. Maximus considers that any means by which the spiritual presence of God is communicated and His power is felt is a symbol of Him. But the symbol could become a more transparent means of communicating the greater and greater power of God. Thus, there is a suite of symbols. Even the incarnate Word of God could become evermore transparent and could manifest in an evermore increasingly felt manner His power in accordance with the spiritual state of those who dedicate themselves to Him through their faith and life:

> Just as the understanding of the Law and the Prophets as precursors of the coming of the Word in the flesh instructed the souls about Christ, so did this same glorified Word of God incarnate become a precursor of his spiritual coming and he instructs souls by his words about the acceptance of his visible divine coming. He always effects this coming by changing those who are worthy from the flesh to the spirit through virtues. And he will do this also at the end of time, clearly revealing to all what is still secret.[6]

The more clearly His presence as a Person is perceived, the more clearly the spiritual light irradiates from His Person.

Thus, "the Law is the shadow and the Prophets are the image of the divine and spiritual benefits contained in the Gospel."[7] In the anticipated shadow is projected not only the blurry form of the original, but also something of its power. For only a ray projected from its original gives shape to its shadow. In this sense, "the manna given to Israel in the desert is the Word of God, which prepares those who eat it for every spiritual delight and which is transmuted to every taste in accordance with different desires of those who eat it."[8]

Regarding the resuming and fullness in the incarnate Christ of the Word's presence and work before Incarnation, both in nature and in the Old Testament, a presence which is thus not suppressed by the Incarnation of the Word, but made more prominent, St. Maximus says, "The mystery of the Incarnation of the Word bears the power of all the hidden meanings and figures of Scripture as well as the knowledge of visible and intelligible creatures."[9]

For this reason, it is not only revelation that finds its climax in the incarnate and risen Logos, a fact that will be fully revealed in the life to come, but the entire cosmos will reveal in a bright light its concentration and wealth of meanings in the Person of Christ, or of the incarnate Logos. The key to the secret of creation is not a general impersonal law, is not a substance, but the Person of the Logos, who is full of meaning—or rather, full of all meanings. Everything culminates in a Person, which is the Personal reality from whom everything originates. All have their origin in this Personal reality, in whom all are preserved and all will be revealed as belonging and illuminated. The Pantocrator—the sustainer and fulfiller not only of the Church, but of all—is a Person: the Personal incarnate Logos. The world was created for the human being who, in turn, was created for Christ, in whom he is fully realized:

> It was for the new man that human nature was created at the beginning, and for him mind and desire were prepared. Our reason we have received in order that we may know Christ, our desire in order that we might hasten to Him. We have memory in order that we may carry Him in us, since He Himself is the Archetype for those who are created.[10]

The infinity of love and of freedom found in God is opened in Christ. Nature itself overcomes its state as a nature subjected to necessity; this nature overcomes in the human person, and fully in Christ, repetition by entering the continuous newness of the freedom in love. The human being was created with a view to Christ, "gauged and measured by the desire for Him . . . that it is able to encompass even God."[11]

Even in the earliest days of the Church, St. Irenaeus said,

> The historical Christ was the prototype God had in mind when He created the first human being. Christ was the complete and perfect man who was going to appear on earth and whom the Creator foresaw by creating Adam according to this future prototype. As a result, Adam was created after the model of the Word who, as Christ, was going to assume in time human nature and to appear on earth as perfect man.[12]

Irenaeus's teaching on Adam as a "child" and on this child's development until the Incarnation of Christ is well known. According to him, the Word became incarnate at the end of the human being's development into "word" (into reason) "as a crowning and ultimate goal of the human race."[13]

The Holy Fathers thus bring into relief the connection between anthropology and Christology, or the fulfillment of the human being and of the cosmos in Christ as the supreme Person in relation with the other Persons of the Holy Trinity.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GOSPEL IMAGE OF JESUS CHRIST: GOD AND MAN

Jesus Christ has had until now and continues to have a great influence in the life of creation. Is this influence due to a real work of Christ, or is it the product of a subjective exaggeration that has been perpetuated in the history of Christianity? First of all, the following can be said: this influence is not the gradual product of an imagination that has been developed in time, but has been felt even from the immediate witnesses of His Resurrection. The testimony about His Resurrection was not crystallized gradually. The forms of this testimony can be traced back to a time not too far separated from Christ's death.[1] The authors of the Gospels describe the Person of Christ in a certain free style, and they do this out of the communion of faith in which they were with the risen Lord. Everything that is written about Christ in the New Testament is imprinted with His efficiency upon the authors, which is distinct from that of any other, solely human personality. These authors testify about Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Person not only as two corresponding things, but they speak about them as if they were under His efficiency in the very moment of writing. Christ's Resurrection is certified by His objective efficiency, which begins immediately to act upon the disciples and is extended upon them and upon their disciples so that it may continue as such throughout the history of Christianity. Christ has not risen without really having made Himself known, in a certain way, as such or without objectively having established the apostles' conviction that He persists in the relationship with those who believe in Him until the end of time. "All tradition about Christ has emerged from the belief in Jesus's resurrection and has been concentrated in the *I-Thou* relationship with the Crucified One who is still alive."[2] The testimony about the Resurrection of Christ could not be the product of a logical deduction from His life, or the product of a subjective fantasy stimulated by the sentimental relationship with Him of those who lived close to Him. Faith in God or the sentimental relationship with the master who died has never by itself led to the belief in the master's resurrection as the basis for the resurrection of all. The inability of natural reasoning to admit such a resurrection, unforced by any fact that would set this reasoning against itself, has prevented it from deducing from faith in God the possibility of resurrection as the basis for the resurrection of all human beings. On the contrary, the inability of natural reasoning to admit Christ's Resurrection, if this were not produced as an uncontestable fact, would have led to the doubt in His divinity, nor would it deduce His Resurrection from the belief in His divinity. This inability of natural reasoning would have put a stop to the fantasy of the apostles in this sense, notwithstanding their sentimental attachment to Him. The Personal character of Jesus, however exceptional, did not convince the apostles beforehand that He had to rise again. Proof of this is their flight during Christ's trial and Passion as well as the doubt they manifested every time He predicted His Resurrection even though, on the other hand, they confessed His divinity (Matt 16:16).

Then again, Christ's Personal reality opens up all its dimensions only after the Resurrection. If Christ had not risen—that is, if the apostles did not have the experience of His Resurrection and of His real efficacy after the Resurrection, even if they considered Christ in a continuous and unshakable way as God incarnate—then His divinity would have remained for them a reality to a great extent closed, hidden, and darkened. Only with the eyes of faith, which is founded on the communion with Christ after His Resurrection, could the apostles understand Him in all the real fullness of His Person. The experience of Christ's Resurrection, which is founded on the communion with Him after His Resurrection, is the "historical" basis that gave the disciples the possibility to acknowledge His "historicity" as God-Man and to describe it as such. One theological theory about Jesus, abstracting this "historical" experience of Christ's Resurrection, denies the divinity of His Person, even in the case of admitting His historicity. However, this historicity is incomplete because it lacks His Resurrection as one of the fundamental events of His "history." This theory eliminates from Christ's life everything that surpasses the possibilities of an ordinary human being.

In its turn, the Resurrection to which the disciples testify is not the resurrection of any other man, but precisely that of Christ, who impressed Himself upon them as a Person with a power, a life and teaching that surpassed any power, any life, and any teaching that can be found within the limits of human existence. It is the Resurrection of a Person who presented Himself as the Son of God, taking no pride whatsoever in this—because it was a real fact—and one who predicted His Resurrection. Abstracting the fact that Christ's Resurrection could not have been an event of an ordinary human being, the experience of the Resurrection itself has opened for the disciples full access to the true "historical" Christ and it assures us of the "historical" existence of Christ as God-Man.

Only through the experience of Christ's Resurrection does the experience of the disciples with regard to Christ receive its fullness as an experience of the "historic" Christ close to whom they spent several years but did not completely understand before His Resurrection. "Placing an emphasis on the ascended Christ does not mean neglecting Christ's life lived by Him as man. On the contrary, the ascended Lord is not just a ghost, for Christ is none other than Jesus who lived within the timeframe between His birth and His death."[3] Consequently, the apostles present themselves not only as the witnesses of Christ's Resurrection, but also as the witnesses of that Christ close to whom they lived all the time since the beginning of His active ministry (Acts 1:21). Thus Jesus, who is seen in the New Testament with the eyes of those who were the witnesses of His Resurrection and shared in the communion with the risen and ascended Lord, is not a different Jesus from the historical one who has been seen, after His Resurrection, in the fullness of His light.

Those who tried to eliminate everything that surpasses the exclusive humanity in Christ were not able to reconstruct the definite image of a historic Christ in the purely human sense of the word. They were not able to do that not only because they could not use other sources by which, according to their method, the rejection of what that method considered to be eliminated from the New Testament image of Christ as not being purely human could have been established, but also due to the fact that the disciples themselves could not capture the Person of their Teacher within a human outline even before His Resurrection. Even then He remained for them a being always beyond all human dimensions, notwithstanding His supremely human closeness to them. They needed the key that is the Resurrection even only to be able to complete, to fully understand, and to clearly formulate this divine character of their Teacher, who seemed to them, even before His Resurrection, as surpassing what the strictly human dimensions could hold.

Now the question arises: should the testimony of the witnesses to the Resurrection be rejected, or received with doubt, or considered insufficient on account that it is at the same time the testimony of certain men who did not stubbornly close themselves off from the experience of the Resurrection, but accepted it and yielded to the force of reality, that is, with their "faith" in this event?

The human "historicity," and concurrently the supernatural character of Christ manifested as such, can in many ways be made clearer on the basis of the Gospel.

First of all, one cannot see from a formal point of view in the Gospels any tendency to make up an image of Christ with the help of fantasy. Jesus's life, words, and deeds are recounted with the simplest means possible, with no intentional gushing of enthusiasm. Then there is an amazing consonance in essence between the Gospels when Jesus's image is described, although in some of the details and ways of expression the authors manifest plenty of freedom, whereby they prove themselves to be possessed by the "precise" and objective reality of what they write about, and not its masters. No fantasy whatsoever could have constructed such a unitary image of Christ, at the same time so uncommon and still so human.

Certain theologians of more recent times have attempted to summarize Christ's human character, which is also superhuman in its humanity, to a few features, as an image that could be neither copied after human models nor constructed with the fantasy that is always unreal because of its tendency to mythologize.

One of these theologians brings into relief the fact that Jesus's life is lived and His death is accepted with a pure conscience and will to be a life and a death for us human beings. But this complete "dedication" of His life and death for us "is accomplished within the dimension which is about not only the contact between humans themselves, but where it is clear that the issue of human being is also the issue of his communion with God. In this dimension the direction of Christ's life toward us corresponds with its direction toward God."[4]

Jesus is aware that only by opening up access to God will He save humans. But this access to God is not opened through a death understood in the sense of the later theory of satisfaction. This lowers the relationship between God and human person to the level of a justice that is measured quantitatively. Christ opens for us the path of access to God by His entry into a perfect "communication" with us. In this communication of love, the "direction" of His life and death toward God meets the direction toward us.[5] Christ gives Himself entirely to us through His life and death while, in doing so, He gives Himself entirely to God's will. But Jesus could not have completely dedicated His life and death to us as a simple man. "Jesus's 'direction' toward us includes a fact that takes place between God and Him, and this fact consists of this: God Himself is the one who communicates Christ to us, and in Him [Christ] He communicates Himself."[6] The Catholic theologian Thüsing said the same thing, completing Bonhoeffer's formula: "Jesus is the man for others because He is the man for God."[7] Jesus's originality consists in living His life and suffering His death in a unique and perfect manner, both for God and for human persons. In this double direction is shown the unity between His life before death and Resurrection, and His efficacy after Resurrection. Jesus's entire existence before death, during death, and after His Resurrection reflects the communication of God's complete love toward us, but also our love toward God, so that our love toward God, as a sign of salvation started within us by God's love, may sprout and develop under the pouring out of His divine love, manifested toward us, and under the power of His human love, manifested toward God.

"Jesus is thus the aim or the ultimate end of all of God's ways toward the world."[8] In Jesus our profound tendency toward communion with God and among ourselves is fulfilled, as well as the tendency toward eternal life in happiness, which can only be a life of perfect love.

"But the leap toward the fulfillment of this tendency ('leap' because it cannot be fulfilled in this world with purely human means) is not possible without accepting the Resurrection of Jesus as God's own response to the life and death of Jesus,"[9] and also as Jesus's spiritual power, which has reached the Resurrection as its culminating result. In this way the

Resurrection is for us the crowning event in the life and death of Jesus, bringing us the result for which He lived and died. But "the Resurrection is also the fulfillment of the hope inscribed in human hearts."[10] Another Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, said that Jesus fulfills the human expectations for salvation, expectations that are felt beforehand and thought of, or the hope as "a fundamental dynamism inscribed in their hearts."[11]

The explanation of Christ's life, death, and Resurrection through the direction of His perfect love toward God and toward the human person is proper to the Holy Fathers. We attempted to demonstrate this in *Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology* (Textbook for the Theological Institutes, vol. 2, Bucharest, 1959) in the chapter "The Aspects of Redemption." Catholic theologians, going beyond the theory of satisfaction, see salvation in Christ achieved through these two directions as it emerges from the evangelical image of Christ. This confirms the fact that the Christology of the Holy Fathers was the only one that mentioned the integral evangelical image of Christ. In the chapter mentioned above we presented, following the Holy Fathers, another direction in the life, death, and Resurrection of Christ, implied in the other two: the direction of His action as God upon His humanity, which raises this humanity, not without its contribution, to a level that has never been attained by any other man's humanity.

This action begins with the Incarnation and ends with the Resurrection of Christ. This action makes His humanity a medium for the wonderful works of Christ as God and a partaker within them. Due to this action, Christ is not only God, but also the perfect man, or the man fully realized through the power of God as no other man was or shall ever be.

However, in this perfection Christ as man remains an authentic man, or man fulfilled in the most authentic way. Only reality itself could give the authors of the New Testament the capacity to describe this reality of Christ, which is so veridical and so supremely authentic. All the attributes of Christ's humanity are in harmony with His direction through life and death toward others and toward God, as well as with the fact of His divinity. The greatness of Christ's divinity could only be manifested in the humility and perfect purity of His intentions and actions as man. Only in this humility, purity, and meekness, which could not have been attained by any of us, was He able to firmly pronounce His divinity in a way that it did not appear as an arrogant pretense or as an imagination of a person with no sense of reality.

Christ's divinity thus appears as a supreme dimension, unattainable with our human powers alone, which consists of the most loving communicability, bearable power, and purity. Because Christ's divinity does not emerge from humanity, however, it realizes and crowns His perfectly achieved humanity. This humanity manifests in its humility, purity, and loving communicability a power that translates into deeds and that surpasses the power of the humanity not united with God in such an ultimate way.

Jesus thus manifested Himself as a wondrous God because He appeared as the *most* human being. On one hand, He appeared as fully established within the conditions of human existence, but on the other hand, He surpasses the limits of this existence, performing not only the most human acts, but also those above and beyond the world. He was hungry, thirsty, needed sleep, suffered physical pains and the lack of understanding from His fellow human beings, and humbled Himself more than any other in walking with the tax collectors, with the oppressed, and with those mocked by society. But He did not divert from the perfect love, did not envy, and did not gossip, although He did reprimand the unjust, the phony, the wicked, and the lazy without closing for them the path to salvation, the path of return to true humanity. He prayed for all and performed powerful deeds transcending nature because He was able to do so.

Who could have invented such a man, so authentic and wonderful at the same time? In any fantasy there is the temptation to develop the described image in one direction or another, and such a fantasy can never present a man so pure, so totally dedicated, and so untouched by one shadow or another of the things that weaken the full light of perfect humanity.

The image of Jesus is a historical one because in its profound authenticity it is reconciled with true humanity, but also due to the fact that this image of the true perfection of Jesus could not have been created by any fantasy.

Through His teaching, which was crystallized in the form of commandments, Jesus in His position as God interpreted His perfect humanity as a result of its ontological and spiritual union with the divine nature and asked human beings to follow Him, promising them His help in their efforts toward this end: "Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Matt 11:29). His teaching is perfect from the beginning in all its precepts; nothing can be eliminated from it because He Himself, as a subject construed by this teaching, is perfect. At the same time, it constitutes the only way that we are obliged to follow, the only way toward perfection and one that is possible to follow. This proves once again the historicity of Jesus and His uniqueness. He is thus proved to be the goal for our humanity, a real and unimagined goal that corresponds to the real aspirations of humanity.

Jesus Christ has come not to destroy the law, which is a divine law and at the same time the law of our nature (Rom 2:14), but to fulfill it (Matt 5:17)—that is, to ask humans to advance higher toward the goal of their fulfillment as human persons, a goal He already attained. The yoke of these commandments is light because it corresponds to the most authentic human aspirations. Whoever takes and carries this yoke finds the true rest for the soul, because it liberates the person from agitating qualms and unhappiness (Matt 11:29). It is in this way that grace meets nature, if by nature we understand the essence that is truly human and open to the dialogue with God as it ascends within Him for its fulfillment. "When we keep the law of grace, we suffer the law of God inscribed in our nature."[12]

If Christ reveals Himself also as the man who attained His fulfillment—because He is united with God as no other human person is or will ever be, except in part through the union with Christ—He must be both our way and our help toward this goal. Properly speaking, He is our way because He is our goal. In His condition as goal He shows His perfect love for us. Precisely in view of this fact, He is our way because He helps us through that very way with understanding to advance toward the goal attained by Him. Given that we did not reach the capability of His love, He is far away from us as our ultimate goal, but because He is in maximum proximity to us through His love, He is also our accessible way.

This once again proves the historicity of Christ and the way in which He transcends history.

The way toward full humanization has been opened for us in Christ, and He is the way toward this humanization, because He is the way toward the communion with God as a community of Persons whom we cannot reduce to the state of objects. He is thus the way toward our full communion with our fellow human beings. Through His Incarnation as man, Christ has made accessible for us our communion with Himself as God in the ultimate human form, or, better said, with the entire Holy Trinity. Only Jesus Christ gave us the power to fully abandon the egoism of sin and confinement within the limits of nature as a system of the processes of composition and decomposition, or of corruptibility that ends in death.

In Jesus—the Man who reached the ultimate end of humanness—the universe itself discovered its whole meaning and destiny as being transparent to God. Christ is "the light of the world," the light that enlightens the world and in which the world is enlightened. Each of us is in a way a light of the world. But this identity is also a mission that we cannot completely fulfill on our own. We see it as being fulfilled in Christ and through Christ as we, too, participate in this fulfillment. Christ is the fulfillment of the real being of the human person—the crown of creation—because in Him the human person is fully united with God. Thus, Christ is so "historic," and so not imagined, and from this point of view He is the most human image of the human person, but, at the same time, He is beyond the level that we as human persons could ever reach with our own powers. Therefore, Christ—the man so real—is also God in His fulfillment as man. More precisely, Christ is the man fulfilled because He is united with man's model, which is the divine Logos. In Jesus Christ, as the incarnate and risen Logos, as well as in those united with Him, the world will attain its perfection, or ultimate goal. Christ is the climactic man in whom creation is fulfilled because He is in full communion with God:

> The account of creation . . . presents the human being as the crown or fulfillment of creation. The word of God is manifested in the actions of the first five days of creation as a simple commandment . . . The human being is called to existence and enthroned in creation through a mission given to him. Only through this latter act is creation completed (Gen 2:1). Creation is thus shown as an order organized in stages and directed toward the human being in whom it finds its supreme fulfillment. Only the human being is put in relation with God with no other intermediary stages.[13]

God unites the world to Himself through the human being. Christ fully gathers the world within Himself through His human nature. As a man united in an ultimate way with God, or as God who acts through man, Christ heals the sick, commands the sea and the wind, raises the dead, and He Himself rises to eternal life, thus showing the ultimate state of the world. This is another way in which He was given after the Resurrection "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matt 28:18). In view of the fact that even before the Resurrection Christ is the fulfillment of the real human being, He carries the latter through Resurrection to the end intended for him.

Now, if the incarnate Logos shows the world as gathered and transfigured in Himself—and He will bring it to this state in all persons who will be united with Him—He is able to do this because He had a special relation with the world even before His Incarnation, a relation that is put in relief through human beings.

St. Paul the Apostle identified the incarnate Christ with the Son of God in whom all things were created and established (Col 1:16–20). All things will be gathered again in Jesus Christ for the reason that all things were established in Him from the beginning. The fact that all things will be gathered again in Christ is anticipated by the fact that all things had been created and established in Him.

St. John the Evangelist identified the incarnate Son of God with the Word and, like St. Paul, knew Him as the one through whom all things were made and who, even before His Incarnation, was the life and light of men that shined in the darkness (John 1:3–5, 14). St. John drew the idea of the Logos from the Stoics and from Philo. However, in identifying Him as the Son of God to whom St. Paul attributes the same fundamental role as foundation for all things ever created, he attributes to this Logos the meaning of a Personal reality that St. Paul attributed to the Son of God.

The Holy Fathers have gone even further in their teaching on the presence of the Logos in the world since creation by also adopting from the Stoics and from Philo the idea that the Logos was present in the world through the reasons/inner principles of created things. But the continuous identification they made between the Logos and the Son of God justifies us to see in these reasons/inner principles the words of the Son of God that put in bold relief the presence of the Logos in the world even before His Incarnation, as a presence of His own Person in relation with human persons.

In the understanding of the Holy Fathers, reason implies the word, and the word is always the word of one person toward another. Therefore, reason itself is a function of one person in relation to another.

In this sense the divine reason has a Hypostatic, Personal character and is always directed toward other hypostases, as is the human reason. This does not exclude, however, the reason having also a sense of *ousia* (being) that is common to all persons. It is life, meaning, and interpersonal relation all at the same time. "The word" in St. John's Gospel was "light and life." As life, it is also a power, and its meaning is not separated from life, neither is life separated from meaning. Every real unit is a unit of life, or of power, and it contains a meaning and relatedness to another unit of life and of meaning. Reason as *ousia* always subsists in the form of persons who are in reciprocal relationships. With such an understanding of the reason as word, the Holy Fathers insist upon the Personal character of the Logos's presence in creation, following in the footsteps of St. Paul and St. John. In this way the Logos's reasons are different from "the Platonic-Philonic ideas":

> According to those ideas the central cosmological issue was in what way was God—as an absolute, immaterial, and pure spirit—able to bring the impure world into being. Here, on the contrary, one starts from the issue of the work of God, [an] issue that is decisive for the biblical thought of the Old Testament. What does God want for the world?[14]

He wants to save it, to take it into an intimate relationship with Himself as a Person, a state of affairs that is fulfilled in Christ. A subsequent interpretation of the Logos's presence in the world through impersonal reasons, as ontological foundations of creation, an interpretation that was imposed through Scholasticism and the philosophy of the last centuries which depersonalizes reason (Kant, Hegel, etc.), is on the way to being obsolete even in Catholic theology.[15]

The Logos, as Personal reason and as subject of the loving thought process, hypostasizes in Himself human nature, the result of which is a personal human realization in an ultimate way. If the human person is created "in the image" of the Logos, the model potentially implies in Himself His image. The Logos achieves His image in a subsistent and ultimate way by assuming human nature as an image developed in Him and as an image inseparably united with the model. Christ's human image as a distinct partner in the dialogue with the Logos is no longer such a distinct partner in Him, but the Logos Himself is in dialogue with the Father both as divine Son and as man. He is also in dialogue with us both as man and as the Son of God. As man in dialogue with the Father, Christ raises His human responsibility to the maximum human level because He is raised as man to this level through His simultaneous condition as the Son of God who is conscious that He is also man. As God in dialogue with us, He descended to the level of the maximum intimacy and love for us precisely for the reason that, being at this ultimate human level, He does not cease to be God at the same time. As God He becomes transparent and visible in His humanity; as man He punctuates the maximum approach in His position as God in relation to us and as obedient Son in relation to the Father. One and the same Person is asking of us a maximum responsibility as God and is manifesting a maximum responsibility toward the Father for our sake. He gives us commandments while He prays together with us and for us. He demands obedience from us while He asks us to receive His love and to follow His example of humility, meekness, and service. In both cases He is the perfect man because at the same time He is also God.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PERSON OF THE INCARNATE LORD IN THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH

The Ecumenical Councils captured in a concise formulation the evangelical and dynamic manifestation of Christ's divine-human Person.

The first two Ecumenical Councils, taking up the confession of faith at baptism practiced by the Church in Jerusalem, established its definitive text with regard to Jesus Christ in the form of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, in which one confesses on one hand that He is the Son of God, the only begotten, of one essence with the Father, begotten before all ages; and, on the other hand, that He was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.

The Fourth Ecumenical Council expands on this confession about Christ by declaring that Jesus Christ is "one and the same Son, truly God and truly man, consisting of a rational soul and body, of one essence with the Father as regards His Godhead and of one essence with us as regards His humanity; like us in all respects apart from sin; begotten of the Father before all ages as regards His divinity, and in the last days begotten of the Virgin Mary, Birthgiver of God, as regards His humanity; recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of the natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence [Hypostasis]."

In essence, one therefore confesses that the Son of God, who exists before all ages, was incarnate and was made man from the Virgin Mary, the Birthgiver of God, and that through the Incarnation the hypostatic union was achieved, or rather the union of the divine and human natures in one Hypostasis, namely one Person in two natures: the Person of Jesus Christ.

But it is worth noting that this definition insists upon the fact that Jesus Christ existed as the Son of God, therefore as a Hypostasis, or divine Person, before the Incarnation. For Jesus Christ, born as regards His humanity of the Virgin Mary, is one and the same with the divine Hypostasis begotten of the Father before all ages. The confession does not say that Jesus Christ was constituted as a Person only through His birth from the Virgin Mary by the union of the divine nature—which before that would not have existed in a person—with the human nature. This was put in bold relief by Leontius of Byzantium, the theologian of the Justinianic era, in order to, among other things, eliminate the doubts of the pre-Chalcedonians who rejected the definition of Chalcedon because they imagined that the affirmation "the two natures come together in one person and one hypostasis" does not sufficiently render the unity of Christ as a Person. In order to express the fact that Jesus Christ as a Person is the same with the Son of God before Incarnation, Leontius of Byzantium used the term "enhypostatization." The Hypostasis of the Word of God was not united with another human hypostasis, but through the Incarnation. He formed for Himself a human nature that He assumed and included in His eternal Hypostasis, and thus He also became the Hypostasis of the human nature.

The first conclusion resulting from this is that the very Son of God was completely united with humanity, or rather, that He came into the maximum proximity to us.

Now He no longer remains as a Person on a plane different from that of human persons; He is no longer content—as He was before His Incarnation and in a more evident way in the revelation of the Old Testament—to make His presence felt, as well as His efficacy as a Person who sustains the rational human person existing distinctly from Him as His image and the reasons (inner principles) of things as distinct images of His reasons.

He no longer carries a dialogue with human persons as a partner from a different plane; His reality as a Person is no longer a mysterious fact on another plane that is grasped through an exceptional experience only by some human persons on a basis of a special revelation. Now the divine Person of the Son of God, or of the Word, enters the plane of the experience common to those who believe in Him, as a Person among human persons but who at once gives them the ability to grasp Him as a divine Person. Before the Incarnation the two natures were "separated" (διίσταντο), says Nicholas Cabasilas, because "God remained Himself alone; our nature was man, and no more."[1]

Now we know for sure that God the Word is a Person, or an existence similar to our personal existence, because He becomes the Person of the human nature, too, without ceasing to be the Person of the divine nature. Thus He guarantees the maximum value and the eternity of human persons. This also shows that human nature was created capable of receiving God the Word as a Hypostasis.

It is difficult to understand what this capability consists of. Man's identity as the image of God or as the image of the Word of God does not, in a concrete way, tell us much either. So that we may be clear in this respect, let us first see what the hypostasis is. *The hypostasis, or the person, is the self state of a spiritual nature or of a nature that is also spiritual;* [2] *it is one of the units of such a nature in strong correlation with the other units and, in the case of the human person, in relation with the Personal God, too.* Thus the person, who is the mode of concrete subsistence of human nature, is a unitary center of all his acts and relations, always new toward other human persons, as well as of his relation with the Personal God.

The person is a unique "who" that exists and knows himself as the subject of a nature or of a complex set of qualities out of which he can bring forth acts that are always new, and in which he supports and receives the acts of other personal and impersonal factors. The unique "who" of the person is in consonance with the complexity of this set of qualities which is manifested in the person's own acts and in which he receives the acts of others. When seen as unity, this complexity is a person; when seen as a complex set of qualities, it is nature. But this complex set of qualities cannot be seen as standing by itself. It subsists in a unitary "who" or as a unitary "who."[3] If nature cannot really exist except in or as a "someone," in or as a person, the supreme reality must also have a Personal character. Only in that Person can nature be contemplated. Thus, reality is Hypostatic, Personal, or it subsists in the Person.

Leontius of Byzantium describes the unity of this "who" simultaneously with its complexity in regards to Christ. On one hand, he considers as hypostasis of human nature the same God the Word who is also the eternal Hypostasis of His divine nature; on the other hand, he regards Him as complex, as the one who comprises or hypostasizes in Himself the two natures. It is worth mentioning that the Hypostasis must not be understood as a basis different from the two natures, but as a mode of concrete existence that penetrates them completely through its hypostatic characteristic by uniting them.[4]

In principle, nothing opposes a supreme unitary "who" to comprise in himself an even greater complexity, greater than that of the human subject. Nothing opposes the realization of a "who" that would comprise not only the complexity of characteristics of the human nature in which are comprised as personalized all elements from the cosmos, but also those of the divine nature, or vice versa. Through this the most comprehensive Personal unity is achieved. This is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God.

Each human person is also a hypostasis, or subject, and a nature: a subject as subsistent nature or as a subsistent center of his actions and reactions, as a basis actualizing his potentials; and also a nature as an instrument or a basis being valued by his aspect as subject or by the fact that he really subsists as hypostasis. Both the hypostasis and the nature exist in every human person, or both the identity as subject, and that of basis and instrument—the latter without the hypostasis being something added from the outside, but the necessary form of nature once it begins to exist in reality. In the words "I am warming up" or "I think," I express both my identity as subject that feels and thinks and my identity as basis or source of feeling and thinking. There cannot be one without the other once they exist. Human nature can never exist concretely only as nature, as basis or as "object," without also having the identity as subject. Neither can the subject exist without nature.

However, in Jesus Christ human nature received its concrete existence not as its own center, but in a preexistent center, in the unity of the Logos's divine Hypostasis.

This does not imply an autonomous subsistence of human nature within the framework of the superior and greater unity in which it came to be. In this case, human nature would affirm itself as a distinct hypostasis. Neither does it mean keeping this nature in a state of pure object because human nature cannot really exist as such, which is to say it does not exist non-hypostasized and therefore non-personalized or non-subjectivized, lacking the character of a subject. Besides, in this case Christ would not be a "complete man." In the case of Jesus Christ, the modality of subject, or the valence of subject of human nature, is not realized as a modality by itself, as an autonomous subsistence, but is accomplished in the hypostatic divine-human wholeness of which it is a part. The characteristics of spontaneity and conscious registering of outside acts, characteristics that are latently comprised in human nature, are not activated by that modality of subject in isolation, but are activated by the divine-human wholeness that also includes it. The divine subject thus becomes a human subject, too.[5]

This does not only mean that human nature has found in God its subsistence as general humanity, but also that it has received in the Word and together with Him the personal human modality that is distinct from other human persons. For as the Son of God is a Person distinct in His divinity from the other divine Persons, in like manner He imprints upon the assumed humanity the identity as the Son of God on one hand, and the identity as a hypostasized or personalized humanity distinct from the other human persons. This is the only way in which the Son of God has, through His Incarnation, put a value not only on the human being in general, but on all human beings as distinct persons. By being personalized in God the Word and bearing, in the case of Christ, the imprint of God the Word's Hypostasis, or Person, His human nature has an openness and a comprehensiveness that other human beings do not have. As the divine nature cannot exist in a concrete way except in distinct persons, likewise the human nature assumed in the Hypostasis of the Word receives Personal characteristics distinct from those of other human persons, thus forming a unique Person with the Word.

Due to the fact that the spontaneous aspect of Jesus Christ's human nature is activated through the hypostatic aspect of the Logos, Jesus Christ did not lack anything in order to also be fully man. However, this complete man is not the same as His identity of being fully God. Human nature encompassed in Christ the entire Hypostatic, or Personal, actualization—which is the same with the one really existing as a proper subject in other persons—but not as an autonomous actualization, nor in a confusion of the hypostasized, or personalized, human nature with the divine nature.

The distinction between Jesus as man and other human persons lies in the fact that as man He is not an autonomous center of acts and reactions. Rather, the human center of these acts and reactions is simultaneously their divine center as well as that of His divine acts. His entire human nature has thus been centered not outside God, but within God the Word.

Among human beings there walked a man who is no longer centered in himself but within God, being—as a Person—identical with God. The relationships of other human beings with this fellow of theirs are not relationships lived outside God, but they are relationships with God Himself. Because this Hypostatic center, which surpasses all human centers, has a power attracting toward God and irradiating good, it is our center. A Personal human center that is simultaneously divine has been placed for eternity in the midst of creation.

Jesus Christ's identity as the central man lies in the fact that the potentials of human nature are no longer activated by a human hypostasis, but by the divine Hypostasis, who embraces with His endless love all persons and all things. As a result, there is no more danger for the potentials of human nature to be activated in an individualistic way, either contrary to other human beings or contrary to God. Christ activates what is proper to human nature, away from any danger for the human potentials to be activated through decisions and acts unfavorable for other human beings and contrary to God. Our incarnate nature has rediscovered its true activation in Jesus Christ because this activation of human nature in conformity with the will of God, its Creator, and in accord with other human beings is the most proper activation of human nature. Nature in its totality belongs to all, and in it are included the tendencies favorable to all, the tendencies that are reciprocally convergent. This does not mean that Christ hypostasizes it without imprinting on it the personal characteristics distinct from those of other persons. As a divine Hypostasis, Christ actualizes the tendencies of human nature that are favorable to us by the fact that His human nature, existing in a divine Hypostasis, is not in jeopardy of being limited in its manifestations by an autonomous human hypostasis that might activate it in an individualistic way.

Thus, one can say that only in Christ is human nature activated in its authenticity and fullness. Even in Christ human nature brings with it its natural will, but the way in which this will is activated is chosen by the divine Hypostasis, who never activates it contrary to human nature. St. Maximus the Confessor says, "It is not the same thing to will and to will in a certain way."[6] The latter is caused by the subject.

In Christ the will and tendencies of the human nature are neither limited nor distorted by an autonomous subject disposed to individualistic tendencies, but by the divine Hypostasis, which gives them an actualization favorable to all and in conformity with God's will. It is God the incarnate Word, who, far from hindering or altering the tendencies of the human will as well as its potentials, could authentically bring them to act in conformity with His will. Because He has brought into act these tendencies in a way entirely favorable to other human persons, one can say that He has, in the most authentic way, personalized human nature, if "person" means a unity that always relates in a positive way to the other persons.

St. Maximus the Confessor says, "Nothing of what is natural, nor the nature itself, is opposed to the Causer of essence."[7] Or again,

> If Christ as man had the natural will, in essence He always willed what He, as God, naturally placed in nature when He gave its existence through creation. For He did not come to alter the nature that He, as God and Word, made, but to deify the nature which He united to Himself in the same unique Hypostasis together with all its natural characteristics except sin; He has done this willingly with the benevolence of the Father and the cooperation of the Spirit.[8]

Christ saved us from the corruption of nature "which we show through the opposition of our will" toward God; He saved us "by the power of His Incarnation," reestablishing in Himself our natural will.[9]

If Christ has brought into act, in the most proper way for nature, its natural will, He has personalized it in the most authentic way, for a nature cannot be brought into act except by personalizing it. If this authentic actualization means that it is in conformity with God's will, it results in the fact that the Hypostasis of the Word has personalized in the most authentic way the assumed human nature because in Himself, as the model for the human person, is included the inherent potential of the human being's personal character. Additionally, if the hypostasis is nature's mode of subsistence, then the divine Logos is the ultimate fundament in which subsists in a concrete way the nature of every human being as hypostasis.

Christ has reestablished not only our will in its activation, but our reason as well. For the Word of God is also the right and supreme Personal reason in the image of which the personal reason of each human being was created in order to think, together and in a dialogue, with the divine Personal reason, the reasons (inner principles) of things as images of the divine Logos's reasons. After the relationship that was kept with the human reason before the Incarnation—a relationship weakened by sin—the divine Personal reason becomes the Hypostasis, or the subject of the human reason, and brings the latter to a complete conformity with its divine reason. The human nature in Christ subjects itself willingly to His divine will as its model and source and views things and human persons, as well as the relations between them, in a proper way and in all their profundity.

The divine reason as Person is more than the sum of rational principles of the right reasoning; it is also life as superrational source of reason, as an infinite depth of meanings; and the human, personal reason is also life full of meaning, a similar depth of meanings. The human, personal reason finds its ultimate fulfillment in this hypostatization in the Logos. Thus the Logos is the human being's fulfillment as person; human nature finds its hypostatic fulfillment in the divine Hypostasis.

In this way the human nature is also seen as fulfilled in the realm of ontological reason in the Hypostasis of the divine reason. Because the human reason and will assumed by the Hypostasis of the Logos do not exist in their own human hypostasis that could individualize the use of reason and of the will contrary to one another, but are hypostasized in the divine, Personal reason and will that are their true model, they are brought into act as reason and will in a mode favorable to all human natures, having a great power to attract them toward unity.

On the other hand, because Christ's human reason was fulfilled in the rational or superrational divine Hypostasis, it was also open toward the infinite horizon of the divine reality together with the knowledge of it. Christ's humanity is transparent to divinity and to other human beings because it does not have its own hypostasis as a possible opaque wall before the reality of God and of other human beings. Christ is supremely the man for others given that He is the man for God, or the humanity fully open toward God.

Thus, a Personal human center has been placed in our midst by the fact that the Word Himself became a Person alongside other persons. By this act He became the Man reestablished in conformity with God, who wills and thinks fully rationally the good of all and, therefore, in conformity with all human persons and in solidarity with them, with the understanding and the will to serve their unity.

If person alone is the irradiating center of life and of spiritual warmth that unifies, then the irradiating center of a loving life and of a unifying, endless force unscathed by any shadow of egoism cannot but be a divine Person who entered into a direct relationship with us as a human person fulfilled in the highest degree.

The believer aspires toward the unity or the relationship with a Person in whom the unity with all is found. God, too, wants to achieve this intimate union of all. In fact, it is in Christ that this unity is accomplished, where the divine will for unification with us meets the human thirst for union with all in the divine center that unites all.

Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain defines three modes of union or communion: according to nature (essence), which is proper to the divine Persons; according to operation (energy), which is proper to the union of God with the human beings before the Incarnation; and according to hypostasis (person), which is proper to the divine and human natures in the Hypostasis of Christ.[10] God's full union with us cannot be achieved but in the latter mode. A union through nature (essence) would mean the transformation of the human nature into the divine nature, something which is not possible. Union through energy (operation), like the one between God and human beings before Christ, is a union through relation, something that keeps God outside humanity and does not guard the latter against sin and alienation.

The hypostatic union of natures is made by the Son of God as the Person of the human nature without annulling this nature. This does not mean that through this hypostatic union one does not also realize a union with the other human beings, which is more than a relational union. Through the very fact of becoming man, the Son of God also enters into a union according to essence with the human beings; this means a more complete relation with them than before His Incarnation. Within the framework of a union according to essence through the human nature, a direct relation takes place through operation or through grace. The new Adam brings to the humanity to which He belongs through His human nature another efficacy of His divinity that is proper to Him in a Personal way.

God's relational union with us humans in Christ is a relation through the community of human nature, but it is also a union through a certain communication between the divine and human natures that are united in Him. It is a direct relation established in this way between God the Word and us humans.

The union that human beings have among ourselves through our common nature also establishes a direct, or maximum, interpersonal relation that does not dispense with the contribution of the will. It is in this communion of nature with us that Christ entered, and through this He entered into a direct relationship with us, a relationship that does not dispense with the contribution of our own will. But this interpersonal relationship is a direct relationship of Christ as God with us because it is sustained not only by the communion of human nature between Him and us humans, but also by a certain reciprocal communion between His human nature and the divine nature.

The union of the two natures in Christ—because it is a Hypostatic, or Personal, union—is not a union by necessity, but through the free condescension of God, who is Personal. Due to this fact, the one Hypostasis of Christ does not originate from a union of natures taken by themselves, but from the will of the Word's preexistent Hypostasis.

That is why Leontius of Byzantium introduced the term "enhypostatization" to describe the reception of human nature into God the Word's preexistent Hypostasis. He says,

> I am so afraid to say that God the Word has in the definition of His nature the union with ours that I will not dare say that the human soul is naturally united with [Christ's] body without divine power. As for the human soul, I would not say that the mixture of elements in their action is produced in a simple manner only by nature; they are brought to order and harmony through God's word, which is superior to nature. Therefore, it is the manner in which the union is achieved, not the reason of nature, that produces the great mystery of humility.[11]

It is within the unifying power of the creating Word that the whole power is found, that power that unites created beings and leads them to even more unity.

The Person of God the Word as a free person explains the unity of all. He gives to all the capability of subsisting in a unity that is His unity. This explains the maximum unity accomplished in Christ, or the fact that God the Word becomes the Hypostasis of the human nature. It is proper to the divine Hypostasis of the Logos to be, especially in a free manner, the Hypostasis of the human nature; it is also proper to the human nature, called to the status of hypostasis, to have as its ultimate hypostasis the Hypostasis of the Word, given that it is created in His image.

Only the human spirit is a window or a door through which nature enters the plane of infinitude and divine freedom. It is only through the human being as a person that the supreme Personal reality can descend spiritually to the order of created nature in order to fully integrate it into the human person and through this into personal divinity. That is why the entire visible creation, unified in the incarnate Word, is concentrated in two natures: the divine nature and the human nature. These are the two parts of the incarnate Hypostasis who encompasses all others and gives them their divine and human qualifications that are undivided and unmixed. Christ views and does everything in a divine and human manner at the same time, in a united but unconfused way. The parts of human nature are organically bound together so that the divine Hypostasis cannot humanly see, feel, think, and work only through one part of humanity separated from the whole of humanity. That is why when speaking of Christ one must speak of a human nature distinct from the divine nature and not of a single, complex divine-human nature like the pre-Chalcedonians, who also infer that one would have to speak of Christ's many parts and many natures when insisting on speaking of His two natures. Leontius of Byzantium says,

> There are two unconfused parts of Christ: divinity and humanity. The soul and the body are not parts of Christ, but they are parts of other parts. One could point to them as showing the full meaning of human nature, but their subdivision is useless.[12]

Nothing can be humanly experienced only through one part of human nature, but everything is lived through the entire human nature.

All human hypostases have the Hypostasis of the Word as their ultimate Hypostasis. But Christ's human nature has God the Word as Hypostasis in such an intimate way that it no longer has its own hypostasis as human beings do. Only in this way can human beings also have God the Word in a more complete manner as their ultimate Hypostasis. At the same time, their hypostases are strengthened through the relationship with the most firm Hypostasis of human nature because this is the one that opens it up the most, together with their hypostases as windows opened toward God and toward each other.

As in the human being the body is integrated with the horizon and freedom of the human spirit without being annulled, but rather fulfilled, in its purpose, so in Christ the infinite horizon of the divine life and the possibilities of divine freedom are opened for the human nature without being annulled, but rather fulfilled, in its aspiration. It is toward this horizon that every human being tends and, in a certain way, partakes of through his relationship with the incarnate Logos. In Christ this horizon is opened for the human nature not through the relationship with the Logos as a relationship with another person, but in the unity of the divine-human Person, of which the human nature is also a part. And Christ communicates this horizon to us in a more direct way by the fact that the Logos is now in a direct relationship with us, a relationship in which we are with our fellow human beings.

If human nature is made for its unconfused existence into eternity, it lives this tendency in the existence as a distinct hypostasis, although the tendency is not fulfilled at once; rather, the nature advances eternally into it. In its real existence in the Hypostasis of the Word, the nature lives at once the entire authentic opening toward infinity, but it is not confused with the divine infinity. As man, Christ always knows that He partakes of the infinity and is resting in it, but He also knows that He is the source of this infinity not as man, but as God.

Thus all human persons are strengthened in their identity as hypostases, or as persons, by the fact that they enter into a relationship with the Son of God, who became, as the Hypostasis of human nature, their ultimate Hypostasis in a more accentuated way. Before the Logos became their ultimate Hypostasis in a more accentuated way by assuming human nature in His Hypostasis, human persons were, to a certain degree, without a close hypostatic support. By receiving in Christ the incarnate Logos as the closer, ultimate Hypostasis, human beings receive the full consistency and hypostatic openness from His power as the superconsistent and superconscious Hypostasis of all human hypostases. The humanity of human beings was not yet complete before the Incarnation of the Son of God as man, before He became the Hypostasis of human nature, says Nicholas Cabasilas.[13] "It was fitting that the members also should be born in this way, since this birth of the Head was the birth of the blessed members; for it was the birth of the Head which brought the members into existence."[14]

We talked above about the conciliation between the complexity of the Hypostasis's content and His perfect unity; also about the fulfillment of human nature and persons through the fact that the Logos becomes the direct Hypostasis of human nature and the ultimate Hypostasis of human persons. The corollary of these two aspects is in the fact that the two natures are united in Christ in a way that is without division, without separation, without change and without confusion. Of these four, "without division" refers directly to the Person of Christ, denoting the two natures. It means that the one Hypostasis of Christ, the same one born eternally of the Father and, in time, of the Virgin Mary, is not divided on account of the two natures, but remains undivided even though the intact natures are neither confused nor changed in their definition, that is to say, neither of them ceases to remain in Him what they really are. The other three refer directly to natures, but their value rests with the unity of the Person. The natures are without separation not in the sense of a simple exterior relation, but in the sense of interpenetration for eternity due to the unity of the Hypostasis. At the same time, the interpenetration and the imprinting of one in the other neither changes nor confuses their substance.

The unconfused unity of the two natures in the one single Hypostasis is so perfect that they cannot be separated; they are not even distinct in reality, but only theoretically. This does not mean, however, the cessation of their existence in the one single Christ, but their unchanged continuity. Their theoretical distinction precludes the bipersonal Nestorianism in Christ; their continuity precludes Monophysitism. Thus their merely theoretical distinction implies also the inseparability and immutability of natures. As such, their theoretical distinction implies the deification of human nature and the humanization of the Word. Leontius of Byzantium says,

> So it is with the separation: it is not thought of in advance of the things in which [it] is seen nor is the unity, but when the things exist and after their union as it is proper to that union. The united humanity is separated from divinity in theory, not in fact. And since the theoretical separation is not in advance of things and of their union, it is seen in them on account of their

immutability, which is not followed by what follows the factual separation.[15]

The impossibility of realistically separating the natures seen in the unity of Christ's Person allowed the Church to use, at the Fifth Ecumenical Council, the expression: the Person of Christ is "of two natures," with the condition that this expression not be understood as annulling or confusing the two natures into one. This could offer a base for agreement with the old oriental churches, as was the intention during the Fifth Ecumenical Council. Canon 8 of this council declares, "If anyone uses the expression 'of two natures,' confessing that a union was made of the Godhead, and of the humanity, or the expression 'the one nature made flesh of God the Word,' and shall not so understand those expressions as the holy Fathers have taught, to wit: that of the divine and human nature there was made an hypostatic union, whereof is one Christ; but from these expressions shall try to introduce one nature or substance [made by a mixture] of the Godhead and manhood of Christ; let him be anathema."[16] The council also condemns in canon 7 those who, like Nestorius, using the expression "in two natures," do not confess that only one Hypostasis was constituted by the union between them, without destroying the difference between them, and do not content themselves with taking in a theoretical manner the difference of the natures that compose Him, but divide the natures or make of them two hypostases. Let them "be anathema."[17]

The fact that the two natures have one and the same Hypostasis and they are not confused with each other makes the divine Hypostasis to be also known through the human nature, the consequence of which is the humanization of the Word and the deification of human nature. The immutability of human nature means its continuing existence in its own "definition," not its keeping in imperfection or its impossibility of being filled with divine life. The matter of the eye does not cease to be matter on account of the fact that it is the organ of conscious vision, or because through the eyes meanings are discovered, or because we do not feel it when we see through it, or on account of the fact that it is overwhelmed by spirit.

What is the positive meaning of the humanization of the incarnate, divine Hypostasis and of the deification of the assumed human nature? All the Eastern Fathers tell us about this. Leontius of Byzantium says,

> All these actions belong to the one and the same, even though they ensue from different natures; the one is named sometimes God and sometimes man. For He has suffered all that man was meant to suffer: He was born, nursed, grew up, and was baptized upon reaching thirty years of age; after baptism He began to perform miracles and to teach among the Jews, and upon reaching thirty-three years of age He was crucified, rose on the third day, and ascended with the body into heaven, being seated at the right hand of the Father. He is the same one who will come after the resurrection to judge the living and the dead.[18]

According to Nicholas Cabasilas, God the Word appropriates in the Holy Mysteries our senses and fills them with His operation as He did with His own body. By this, all of them are imprinted with our psychosomatic functions. Christ renews, transforms, and recreates them as functions of His own body:

> For when the greater powers are brought to bear upon the lesser they do not permit them to retain their own characteristics; when iron comes together with fire it retains nothing of the property of iron; when earth and water are thrown on fire they exchange their properties for those of fire. If, then, of those which have similar powers the stronger thus affect the weaker, what must we think of His wonderfully great power? It is clear, then, that Christ infuses Himself into us and mingles Himself with us. He changes and transforms us into Himself, as a small drop of water is changed by being poured into an immense sea of ointment.[19]

Nicholas Cabasilas speaks of two types of lives, two types of feelings in the human being: the natural and the spiritual. Each of the natural ones functions distinctly from the other, and that is why the natural man lives his life in fractions. As they are concentrated through the Mysteries, the senses are united in Christ with those of Christ, functioning together with them in unity. The various functions of the human being find in Christ their true center and are unified. The human being finds simplicity and unity that are imprinted with Christ's image.[20]

Love toward a person unifies the functions of the human being by imprinting everything with its image, and more so the love toward Christ's captivating Person. "By Him we are truly able to live, since He is the very life itself. Since He makes those who cleave to Him holy and righteous, He not only instructs them and teaches them what is necessary and leads the soul to virtue and its faculty of right reasoning into action, but also He Himself becomes for them 'righteous from God and sanctification' (1 Cor 1:30)."[21] So much more is He the divine life of His body; therein lies the cause of life in us. He does not co-suffer with us, but bears in Himself our pains as He bore the pains of His own body:

> Nor did He merely will for us deliverance from evils or regard our sorrow as His own. He appropriated our pains and transferred them from us to Himself . . . He shared the suffering of the unfortunate not merely in thoughts and in will, but in very deed. He was not content merely with sharing in misfortunes, but took all on Himself and died our own death.[22]

Not being a simple human hypostasis, but the all-encompassing and loving divine Hypostasis of all humanity, Jesus Christ has in His Personal humanity a medium through which He lives the pains of all humanity, and all human beings can partake, through His Personal humanity, of His divine life.

Leontius of Byzantium makes use of the hypostatic union to explain the fact that Christ's body is not only full of the Son of God's divine life, but is also life giving. As the body of the life-giving Word, it can no longer bring into act the potential for corruption:

> We believe that the Lord's body is life giving because it was made alive by the Word of God, for otherwise it would not be life giving. It was not made alive through the operation (energy) of the life-giving Word as was the case with Adam's creation, for in this case the human person would potentially have corruption, but through the inhabitation of the life-giving nature in our nature, namely through the union of two natures that show one single Hypostasis, so that corruption found potentially in the human nature would no longer be activated.[23]

Leontius, and other Holy Fathers as well, explain the transmission of the qualities of Christ's deified nature to human beings by way of the communion of nature. When received into the bodies of human persons, the deified Body resurrects and deifies our bodies as well.

Contemporary theology explains this fact through the direct, personal relationship realized between God the Word become man and other persons who believe in Him, who open themselves to Him. This relationship does not ignore the communion of nature that, in fact, makes that relationship possible. The Body we receive in our bodies is Christ's Body, belonging to one of the divine Persons, a body that is in communion with our nature. Without this personal relationship, without the love between the incarnate Word of God and human persons, love that animates this relationship, the simple eating of Christ's Body would not deify them. And so the Spirit of the Word, as the Father's love toward the Son and us, and as the Son's love toward us, plays an important role in the deification of human persons through the partaking of the Lord's Body, present in the Mysteries. "If the Spirit was not given to Him with measure . . . but on account of the equality of substance and through the love for Him, it is evident that on account of His natural love the Father gave His consubstantial Spirit to the consubstantial Son."[24]

As mentioned above, the human person had imprinted in him through creation the tendency to ascend, through the love of God, through the love of the everlasting love, "to the point where he was to receive his hypostasizing in the Word and by this his personal fulfillment, his adoption and deification."[25]

Within man as a spiritual being, there is open to creation the path toward the exit from repetition, the path of freedom and of the continuous newness in dialogue with the Word. It is only within the person to whom the desired path is open in the intimacy of the communion with God, distinct from the plane of creation, that the newness and freedom do not move within the "newness" of the infinite paths of a closed labyrinth in the cave of immanence, but within the real infinitude of continuously new meanings and of supernatural love.

The entire divine economy, from creation to the Incarnation of God's Son as man and to the full deification of human nature—namely the hypostasizing, or personalizing, of human nature in Him, as well as His direct entrance into relationship with human persons—seeks their complete personalization, whose full outcome will be revealed in the life to come. The basis of this complete personalization, or deification, is the humanization of the Son of God, and its consequence is our deification, whose basis is the deification of human nature assumed by Christ.

The Son of God is humanized without ceasing to be God, but by becoming the Hypostasis of human nature. Through this He appropriates our ways of thinking and feeling in order to transfigure them or to humanize them until the end or, furthermore, to deify them.

Due to the very fact that Christ's human nature does not have its own hypostasis, but its Hypostasis is God the Word, there is no ceiling toward God; neither is there a dividing wall between Christ as God and man and human persons. He is in both of these qualities as God and man, fully humanized and fully deified: fully humanized as God, and fully deified as man. All are able to be humanized and deified in the relationship with Him. It is in Him that we see and realize our humanity fully transparent toward God and the deification fully bestowed upon us.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SAVING POWER OF THE INCARNATE WORD

A. The *Kenosis* of the Son of God and the Deification of His Human Nature

The unity of the Person of Christ in the two natures has a series of implications that not only cast more light on Him, but also show more explicitly the saving consequences of the Incarnation of the Word directed first toward the human nature He assumed and then toward us, through the intimate relationship established between the human person and God.

In these implications the saving work of Christ is shown in its fundamental aspect: a work directed toward His human nature as pertaining to His own Person. Christ would not save us were He to manifest Himself as purely divine through the divine nature's attributes and actions toward us, and as purely human through His human nature's attributes and actions. In both cases He would not raise His human nature to cooperation for its salvation and ours. Moreover, in both cases He would remain, as God, inaccessible to us, and then the union of the two natures in His Person would remain unknown and ineffective.

Some of the implications are more the result of the union of the two natures in His unique Person, as, for example, the *kenosis* as basis for the Incarnation, or the Holy Virgin Mary's identity as Birthgiver of God, because these form the basis of Christ's hypostatic union. Others, such as the deification or the *kenosis* through Incarnation, or the lack of sin, are consequences because they are brought into act as a result of the Incarnation, and they represent Christ as He accomplishes the work of salvation in its fundamental nature.

Given that Christ, God the Word, is the Hypostasis of both natures, and given that in this unique Hypostasis there really subsist and are activated the attributes and powers of both natures, a real communication between the attributes and the operations of these two natures is established through this Hypostasis. It is due to the common Hypostasis that both the essential unchangeability of the two natures and their real communication is maintained, communication by means of which their separation is avoided. Were this communication not to take place, the Hypostasis would manifest Himself at times as purely divine and at times as purely human. It would not be God the Word who would speak the human words; nothing divine would be manifested in the human actions and sufferings, and in the miracles of Christ His humanity would only have the role of an exterior and passive organ. Human beings would not encounter God the Word Himself through the human means accessible to them. The direct dialogue between the Word of God and human persons would not have been realized and would not continue to take place. God would not have been humanized, and the human being would not have been deified. God would not have descended and would not continue to descend in a real way to us. The order of the persons from the two planes would not be united to encompass everything. The order of the Trinitarian Persons would remain in the transcendent world, and the order of human persons would remain on earth.

The entire communication of attributes is achieved through the unity of person, more precisely through the fact that this Person is the incarnate God the Word. For the human person would not be able of his own initiative to incline toward the powers of the divine nature. The two natures could not communicate their powers and actions by themselves because this would lead to pantheism. In pantheism there are not two natures. The real variety and the unity in existence is maintained by the Personal God who, being transcendent by nature, is able to become by His will the Person of His creature, reconciling all things without suppressing or confusing them.

Through the operations accomplished together with the human nature, the divine love irradiated out of Christ's Person, the same one for the two natures. Through the same Person, the human nature imprinted its particularity upon the operations accomplished together with His divine nature. Consequently, we can attribute the human operations to this Person when viewed as God, for they belong not only to God separated from humanity, and He is not the subject of things divine only; and we can attribute the divine operations to the same Person when viewed as man and calling Him as such, for they belong not only to a separate man, and He is not the subject of things human only. A similar method can be applied to His attributes.

Clarifying the role of the unique Person and the inseparability of natures in the Person's unity, St. Maximus the Confessor describes the communication of attributes of the two natures as follows:

> No one nature belonging to the same Hypostasis was activated in a separate manner from the other. The Hypostasis would make evident one through the other. Because [Christ] truly had both natures, as God He moved humanity and as man He discovered His own divinity. He suffered in a divine manner (θεϊχώς τὸ πάσχειν ἔχων), so to speak, because He suffered willingly, not being a simple man, and performed miracles in a human manner because He performed them through the body due to the fact that He was not entirely revealed as God. The passions are miraculous and new through the divine power of the nature of Him who suffered, and the miracles are suffered, being accomplished through the suffering power of the body of Him who performed them.[1]

Each nature participates in a real way through the common Person giving to, and receiving from, the other. "Through the Person" means on the basis of the divine economy, which is the operation of the will, not on the basis of necessity. One nature communicates to the other nature through the Person the operations (energies), but one is not identified with the other. These operations, however, are not communicated as from person to person but within the same Person, namely in a maximum degree allowed by the condition of being without confusion. For within a person and through His unique subject everything existing in that person brings His contribution to every act.

Leontius of Byzantium describes the profound change produced within Christ's human nature due to the fact that it is hypostasized, or personalized, in God the Word. Through this Hypostasis of both natures, the power of the divine nature is communicated to the human nature, producing a change within the latter that does not mean that this is taken out of its proper definition. On one hand, these new characteristics do not derive from the human nature itself and, on the other hand, they lead the human nature toward that to which it aspires.

The Holy Fathers always differentiate between what is according to nature (κατὰ φύσιν) and what comes necessarily from nature (ἐχ φύσεως). The first is realized through the will helped by grace, the second out of a necessity. In Christ, the former is realized through the economy, which is the operation of the will. The characteristics of divine nature are imprinted in the assumed human nature not out of the necessity of this nature, but through the will of the Word's Hypostasis, or through the economy. That is why these characteristics can raise the human nature to the goal to which it aspires, or to what is in conformity with it (κατὰ φύσιν), but do not take it out of itself.

In every place, the factor that produces God's descent and human nature's ascent is the Person of God the Word with the accord of the human nature personalized in Him, or existing in His Person.

Leontius of Byzantium says,

> It is evident to a more careful observer that all the characteristics of the Lord's body are contained in a more general characteristic of His that is the cause of them all. The fact is that His body does not subsist [does not have its Hypostasis—ὑποστήναι] without God, namely in His simple Hypostasis, according to His nature. Therefore, the characteristics that are shown particularly belonging to Him are different than those of ours, of all men. They are worthy of God, such as being born without sin, His faultless life, His intention always all good, the super-powerful strength toward performing miracles, the knowledge above wisdom, the all-perfect and supernatural virtue, and all other things just as divine . . . And if His things are never shown without the divine nature, then these characteristics of His must belong to the entire Hypostasis. For no one would consider these characteristics which come from or are in the other nature as belonging to another hypostasis. Because these characteristics of God's body are divine, they necessarily testify to the fact that their Hypostasis is not without the divine nature. And because the human nature is not non-hypostatic, they testify to the fact that this divine Hypostasis is also the Hypostasis of the body whose divine

> characteristics are different from the characteristics of human beings, who are of one essence with Him.[2]

One can observe Leontius's description of the divine characteristics of the body not by way of nature, but through the fact that it is the body of the divine Hypostasis.

In a different place Leontius emphasizes that the natures are not abolished through the communication of attributes. This is so because no matter how much power the human nature would receive, it still remains human nature. If, then, in the reality of their union in the unique Hypostasis, each nature is regarded as participating with its own attributes to the attributes of the other nature, we can see by way of thinking that each attribute is in conformity with its own nature and different from that of the other nature:

> According to Scriptures and the understanding received from the Fathers, we often show the whole through a part and use the name of the parts for the whole by naming God the Word the Son of Man and by confessing that the Lord of glory was crucified. But on account of this we do not abolish through the communication of attributes the reason proper to each attribute in Him. In addition to this, through the proper name we make known the fact that in regard to the communication of attributes in the unique Hypostasis, we concurrently see the attributes in which one nature participates as being proper to the other nature.[3]

St. Maximus the Confessor gives a clearer formulation to the communication of attributes. He acknowledges that the attributes of the two natures are maintained in Christ up to a degree, so that the human ones are known as human. But the attributes of one nature are always imbued with those of the other. This means a deification of human nature up to a degree even during its existence on earth. Its deification will be complete after the resurrection. Even then, by way of contemplation one will know what is deified and what deifies, namely the human nature in its distinction from the divine nature, although in reality one cannot be separated or even distinguished from the other. On one hand, a continuous progress in deification paradoxically takes place and, on the other hand, the human nature does not come out of its definition, of its specificity, on account of the fact that it has a continuous need to receive, whereas the divine nature remains a source of life and light that never dries up.

"The Son operates both divine things and human things; moreover, He operates them according to their nature, as it was said: divine things according to the divine nature and human things according to the human nature but with the participation (or with the communion) of the other, not in a separate manner."[4] This means that both are operated by one and the same Hypostasis and that, when named God, the human things are attributed to Him, and when named man, the divine things are attributed to Him. This attributing has a real basis and is not simply a nominal one.

In another place St. Maximus affirms even more clearly the preservation of each nature's attributes and operations and also, on the other hand, their activation by way of reciprocal participation, or communication.

> Even though we see the distinction of His parts, we properly attribute things divine to divinity and things human in Him to humanity; nonetheless, on account of the unity what is proper to one nature, we attach through reciprocal communication to the other. Therefore, we call God sufferer against sin (not as a result of sin) and body, assumed and become what it is, and what is He who anointed it, and I dare say according to the godly Gregory "co-God"; for He was not operating things divine only as God, because He operated them through the body mentally animated and united with Him according to hypostasis, not through the uncovered divinity as before; neither was He operating things human only as man, because through dominion He was infinite in power and not subjected to necessity.[5]

Or,

> Let us, therefore, safeguard, according to the explanation given by the saints, the reason for the distinction unblemished, maintaining the natures and their attributes according to being and after the union; at the same time we should safeguard unbroken the manner of the economy [of the Incarnation], maintaining unitarily the most complete fusion.[6]

St. Maximus goes as far as accepting the co-penetration of the two operations in all as one single "theandric" operation, according to Dionysius the Areopagite, without confusing the human operation with the divine one and vice versa:

> Even Cyril talks about the combination and unity of natural operations. This most renowned man wants to show that the body became God and its essential operation became divine through its unity by nature with God the Word and that it [the body] operated the things above man within the framework of what is according to nature. The Word Himself has willingly become man by assuming the body and operated things human even though He was God by nature. He declares that the Word did not heal or performed the miracle of resurrection only through the all-powerful commandment, without being revealed as God, but has taken as co-worker for this purpose His holy body, through which He healed and raised from the dead by means of touching and of His voice. This in order to show the body capable of resurrection by the fact that it was united with Him . . . and to show that the divine operation in miracles was not His alone, but also His holy body's on account of the union. For this purpose He made His body co-worker in the divine things, as does the soul with its body for the fulfillment of its proper things. This unique and related operation seen in both cases proves the unity of natural operations. It also shows in itself the distinction and duality of operations, or a theandrical operation.[7]

The expressions of St. Maximus about the cooperation of the natures through the one Hypostasis up to the deification of the human nature, without its suppression, but rather with its perfection, are also used in the definition of the Sixth Ecumenical Council: "For as his most holy and immaculate animated flesh was not destroyed because it was deified but continued in its own state and nature, so also his human will, although deified, was not suppressed, but was rather preserved according to the saying of Gregory the Theologian: 'His will is not contrary to God but altogether deified.'"[8]

To sum up, the communication of attributes means not only the nominal attribution of characteristics and human operations to Christ as God, and of the divine characteristics to Christ as man by the fact that He is one and the same subject of both, but also the real imprinting of the human characteristics and operations with the divine ones and vice versa, through Him as the subject through whom both are unitarily realized without confusion.

The communication of attributes places in a more evident relief the mystery of the Incarnation, or the wonderful fact that the Son of God as a Person of the divine nature unites with and through Himself His divine nature with His human nature.

With the powers and gifts of His divine nature, the Son of God overwhelms His human nature not to suppress it, but to perfect it. St. Maximus the Confessor says, "The Lord's body is holy and has His power against all disease; it was and is holy not because it is thought of as simply holy and existing only in His reason, but on account of the fact that it is the temple of God the Word, who sanctifies His own body through the Holy Spirit."[9]

As our body, because of the soul that permeates it, consists not only of a material makeup and cannot be thought of apart from the soul, such is also the case with the hypostasized human nature in God the Word.

Thus the Son of God opens the way toward our perfection through our relationship with Him. In this way He begins His work of salvation through what He does with His very own human nature. He has not just assumed humanity in order to be our juridical representative, to pay or to suffer in our stead for the offense against God, as is the case in Western theology.

As regards the participation of one nature in the other, we presented in this chapter more of the participation of the human nature in the divine one, that is to say what deifies the human nature and what makes us able to see through it the divine "glory" of Christ. The participation through the one Hypostasis of the divine nature in human things will be treated in the following chapters.

In order to fill the human nature with His "glory," "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14), the Son of God had to "make this nature His own" through Incarnation, that is to say, to become its Hypostasis. This "impropriation" of the human nature represents the humility of God's nature, or His so-called *kenosis*, or "emptying," of the glory He had before Incarnation (John 17:5).

St. Paul the Apostle says directly that because the rich Son of God became poor for us, we were able to share in His richness, for through that poverty His richness has come to us. Had He not descended to our capabilities of receiving His richness, He would not have enriched us, but would have either left us as we were or suppressed us through His manifested omnipotence. His descent is the condition of His encounter with us at the level where we are able to receive His richness. His descent is the condition of our deification. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). In accord with this, Leontius of Byzantium considers the descent of the Son of God as the only "remedy" for our disease. "Through economy, the only wise doctor of our souls has healed the disease of all by receiving within Himself our sufferings."[10]

One can already see that two phases can be distinguished in the descent of the Son of God: one prior to the Incarnation, through which the Son of God accepts becoming man; and the other following the Incarnation, in which God takes upon Himself our suffering. In fact, the latter is implied in the former, given the suffering condition of the human being, because God did not become man to suppress the content of our humanity. He took upon Himself our sufferings in order to overcome them from within. This issue of how the Son of God, on one hand, gives divine power to His body and, on the other hand, bears its sufferings will be treated later on. It suffices here to say that these sufferings can only be overcome by bearing them, which is also a power in itself.

St. Paul the Apostle speaks directly in his Epistle to the Ephesians about these two phases of the Son of God's emptying. Even though he does not present it directly as the condition of our ascent, it is implied:

> Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name. (Phil 2:6–9)

St. Cyril of Alexandria considers, in accord with the quotations from St. Paul, that this emptying does not refer to the humanity assumed by the Son of God, but to the Son of God Himself. He makes this emptying the argument for the union of the two natures in one Person, or for the assumption of the human nature by Christ in His very own divine Hypostasis. For if there were two persons in Christ, one divine and one human, the Son of God would not have emptied Himself, remaining in an external relationship with man. Neither was man capable of emptying himself because, rather, his nature was honored by its assumption into the Hypostasis of the Son of God. Only God the Word humbled Himself through the Incarnation. But in this case we must admit that God the Word became in fact the Hypostasis of human nature.[11] Certainly, the Son of God's emptying in the human nature has also drawn it into a certain humility that would not have taken place without its assumption into the divine Hypostasis. This humbling, however, is different from the emptying of the Son of God.

The idea of St. Cyril that the emptying refers to the Son of God and not to His humanity is not in contradiction with the general idea of the Church Fathers that the divinity could not assume our sufferings. For it was not the divine nature that became subject to suffering, but the Person of this nature, inasmuch as He also became the person of the human nature. On the other hand, Christ has the power by which He bore sufferings without passing through them into sin, because He is the Son of God, bearer of the divine nature. He has the power through this nature to bear human sufferings. The impassibility of the divine nature does not have to be understood as lack of care for humanity or as impossibility to participate through its Hypostasis in human things. Such an impossibility to participate would cause limitation or suffering. These are all stated by Leontius of Byzantium; of the soul's tendencies through desire and quickness toward God, he says,

> The Word of God could not receive any, being unchanged and unchangeable by nature. However, the Word would not refuse on account of the impassibility of nature to be united by essence with man's nature, so that this refusal would be viewed as a true passion or that He would be afraid to be in those whose souls have Him as helper and sustainer, because they have not been harmed by the body, but were rather enriched from God, having the body as co-worker toward virtue and not vice versa.[12]

As a Person, God is free to participate, or rather to strengthen those who suffer. One can therefore say that sufferings pertain to human nature and that God assumed them because He became man, not to fall under their power, but to conquer them with His power. He assumed the sufferings, in which He showed His freedom and power, in order to conquer the weakness of our nature, which succumbs to them.

The *kenosis* consists precisely in the appropriation of our nature by God the Word in all its pure bearing of our pains. Without this the Son of God could not become truly man.

St. Cyril also makes the *kenosis* an argument that the Son of God, by assuming our humanity, has remained at the same time the Son of God, for otherwise how or from where would one know that He Himself is the one who operates in humility and suffers through His humanity? Similarly, had He not remained the Son of God, how would He have conquered the sufferings He bore, eliminating the sinful passions from our nature and deifying it? By this St. Cyril refutes in anticipation the Protestant kenotic theories of the nineteenth century, according to which the Son of God gave up—through the Incarnation, for the time of His life on earth—the divine omnipotence, omnipresence, knowledge, and consciousness. "How did He become poor? By the fact that being God by His nature and the Son of God the Father, He became man and was born with the body from the seed of Adam, putting on the measure fit for a servant, namely that which is human. For He who did not consider it disdainful to become like us, how would He give up those by which one knows that He became like us for us."[13]

The *kenosis* consists in the fact that the Son of God assumed, made His own (οἰκειώσατο, ἰδιοποιήσατο) the human nature and its weaknesses not imprinted with sin. What this appropriation consists of is a mystery. It expresses the intimate relationship between the divine Hypostasis and human nature. If in the divine Hypostasis the human nature is actualized, or if He becomes the composite Hypostasis of the divine and human natures, then one and the same subject really does and suffers everything that is human; the same subject is also sinless. The same subject, or Hypostasis, lives and suffers in a real manner the bodily things, but also performs miracles in a real manner through the agency of the body and makes this body life giving. Thus, the one Hypostasis fills the body with divine power and suffers what pertains to the body. But He suffers with power and overcomes His sufferings on account of this. St. Cyril also insists on the deification of the body through the Incarnation. The human body, which we experience to a great extent as lacking transparence, is for Him life-giving, because it receives divine life. "For the body is not simply the body of someone like us, but it is the very own body of the divine Word who creates everything and it is His own in the same way as one would say that our bodies are proper to each one of us."[14]

St. Cyril deals less with the *kenosis* as assumption of our sufferings by the Son of God and more with the assumption of our nature and of its actions in general. We have seen that Leontius of Byzantium speaks of the assumption of our sufferings as a means of their healing. St. Maximus the Confessor speaks even more about this. According to him, only because the Son of God remained unchanged in His divinity within this union was He able to perform so many powerful actions through the body and to deify it; likewise, only because He remained God in His descent to our nature was He able to heal its wounds. That is why St. Maximus says that Christ achieved our salvation through both of these: sufferings (as manifestations of *kenosis*) and miracles (as signs of the divine power manifested through the body). However, the final result was the liberation from sin and our deification. "Through miracles, He manifests Himself as remaining unchanged in what He was, and through sufferings He shows Himself as maintaining unchanged what He became. Through both miracles and sufferings He granted us the annihilation of sin and the grace of deification."[15]

The assuming of our nature by the Son of God is the first act of His *kenosis* (as can be seen in the Epistle to the Philippians 2:6–9). This *kenosis* is continued in His obedience as man and in His bearing of human necessities (hunger, thirst, sleep, fear of death, pain, etc.) and in suffering death itself. In all these is shown His acceptance of the consequences of suffering in our nature, only without sin. These human necessities are not a *kenosis* of human nature, which had them in itself. It *is* a *kenosis* of God the Word, who accepts bearing all of them.

This acceptance was necessary in order to heal the human nature of all those necessities. Leontius of Byzantium expresses the meaning of accepting these weaknesses when he combats the Aphthartodocetists, who affirmed that Christ's body was incorruptible and lacked the ability to suffer. He said,

> The body is known to be suffering and corruptible. The first makes Him who is above us like us, whereas the latter does not allow Him to remain like us, but only as long as it takes for healing and until what is ours is raised above us, that is, until the resurrection. For we will not have the likeness of God unless we suffer with Him who suffered. But how did He suffer if not like us? He would not have suffered like us if He did not remain like us.[16]

In this is affirmed the paradox that through the sufferings accepted through *kenosis*, the Son of God in fact communicates a divine power to the human nature. Thus there is no contradiction between the power given by the Son of God to His body, which He made a collaborator in the performance of miracles—or life-giving—and the power to bear and thus conquer sufferings. To bear sufferings without complaining is also a power. These sufferings are, strictly speaking, the body's necessities, which cause pleasure when they are satisfied and pain when they are not. The human person has become so used to the pleasure of satisfying the body's necessities that he satisfies them beyond the necessary limit, seeking pleasure in itself. On the other hand, he avoids pain even at the cost of renouncing the values that maintain the spiritual health of his nature by accepting a real spiritual disintegration. In all this is manifested a terrible weakening of our nature, caused by overlooking the enduring future for the sake of the present moment. The human being overlooks the fact that the repeated satisfaction of certain present pleasures will bring about a continuous chain of future pains. Jesus bridled the tendency toward pleasure, satisfying only the strict necessities of nature. Even then, if He was risking the weakening of the nature's spiritual powers and the betrayal of spiritual values, He would give up that satisfaction by accepting and suffering even the pain of death. By doing so He strengthened the spirit of the human nature and restored its strength, namely the truly conforming state of nature.

By bearing these sufferings Jesus proves Himself as "the strong man," the man reestablished in his true strength. That is why in Eastern icons the crucified Christ is not Christ fallen to the lowest state of weakness: in the Eastern tradition the cross is conceived of as an occasion to strengthen human nature or the spirit of this nature, not as a simple satisfaction given to God for the offense of the people, a satisfaction expressed in the acceptance of man's self-annihilation, which is understood as an extreme weakness. In the East the acceptance of death before God is understood as strength. That is why the death Jesus suffered is at the same time an occasion for manifesting the power through which death is conquered by the Son of God in the body and with the collaboration of the strengthened body. For the body too can be strong in bearing sufferings through the power given to it by the Son of God on behalf of the divine nature. Thus there is no contradiction between the power given to the human nature in performing healings and the power of endurance. It is in the power of enduring sufferings that the body becomes interiorly capable of being an instrument of healings and of His Resurrection as the last step in this direction. Therefore, by accepting this humbling of the body, the Word of God simultaneously strengthens it.

St. Gregory of Nyssa writes,

> But this His descent to the humility of man is a kind of superabundant exercise of power, which thus finds no check even in directions which contravene nature . . . In like manner, it is not the vastness of the heavens, and the bright shining of its constellations, and the order of the universe, and the unbroken administration over all existence that so manifestly displays the transcendent power of the Deity, as this condescension to the weakness of our nature; . . . it has been pointed out that His goodness, wisdom, justice, power, incorruptibility, are all of them in evidence in the doctrine of the Dispensation in which we are. His goodness is caught sight of in His election to save lost man; His wisdom and justice have been displayed in the method of our salvation; His power, in that, though born in the likeness and fashion of a man, on the lowly level of our nature, and in accordance with that likeness raising the expectation that He could be overmastered by death, He, after such a birth, nevertheless produced the effects peculiar and natural to Him.[17]

This shows that His sufferings were not a simple characteristic of nature, but the expression of the *kenosis* of the Son of God become man, who suffers in order to save and who thus gives His nature the power to suffer. In this way one understands how the Son of God's *kenosis*, even though it is suffering, has at the same time a deifying effect upon nature, but not without its cooperation. Herein lies precisely the meaning of *kenosis*: to facilitate the direct participation of the Son of God in the strengthening of human nature, in order to make it an active medium of the divine love through the manifestation of power and through the bearing and overcoming of suffering. "God, who created nature, after it was weakened under the burden of sin, has healed it out of love for us. For in emptying Himself for us and taking the form of a servant, He has united it with Himself unchangeably by becoming fully man like us, from us and for us, so much so that it seemed to the unbelievers that He was not God, . . . in order to untie the works of the devil [in us] and to return to nature its reasons and furthermore, to reestablish the power of love, the opposite of self-love, and by this its union with Him and that of the human beings among themselves."[18]

The divine power is thus manifested in the bearing of sufferings at the level at which humanity can also participate in that power. In the performance of miracles, Christ's human nature participates in the same divine power, being strengthened by the power of the Word. That is why the two natures are so connected that they do not exist one without the other, and only together do they achieve the complete liberation from sin and the deification of human nature. A nature that cannot bear and thus overcome sufferings is not free and cannot become perfect without conquering the sufferings from within through patience. By bearing sufferings, the human person is already above them.

According to St. Maximus the Confessor, the *kenosis* is not God's fall from His Godhead, but an act of His goodness and a mode of manifesting His power in order to strengthen the human nature from within: "For God's *kenosis* was His voluntary mystery on account of His goodness toward men, not a fall from godhead," or "a diminution of that"; it was "the voluntary descent through the body."[19] That is why the Godhead remained unchanged during *kenosis*. Even God's Personal act of descent out of love is also an act of power. But it is an act of power adapted to the measures of human nature, so that this nature may be able to be assumed by the Son of God.

In fact, both the suffering of human weaknesses, unaffected by sin, and the endowing of human nature with divine power in order to conquer sufferings represent the manifestation of the same divine love lowered to the level of human nature. And love is power, the most authentic power. It manifests its power so much more as the One who has this power descends lower, without being changed. For true and powerful love is not altered in its descent.

This apparent descent of the power through love hides the presence of His power to an inferior, human judgment. This judgment considers that there is a contradiction between its understanding of power and humility. Spiritual persons, however, feel the true love in the unaffected humility of the Son of God.

The *kenosis* of the Son of God was also due to the fact that human nature could not bear Him in the manifestation of all His glory and power. In highlighting this, St. Maximus the Confessor says that—although between the powers of our souls and bodies there is a correspondence, because we are able to manifest all the powers of the soul through the body—in Jesus Christ the divine powers are infinitely too great in order for all to be manifested through His body. Even though human nature is preserved unchanged and unconfused in the divine nature, it is like "a drop of water in the ocean of divine myrrh":

> In us the soul has the natural powers of the body corresponding to its operations (energies), the body being capable of them by nature through the fact that it comes into existence at the same time with the soul. But the Word of God does not have, according to any reason and manner, the powers of the nature assumed by Him corresponding to His operations (energies) according to nature. For one does not measure by nature what is above nature. Neither is anything capable, in what pertains to nature, of what is above nature.[20]

This infinite surplus of the divine powers, in relation to the power that can be activated through Christ's human nature, does not mean that Christ as a subject does not fully experience both things human and things divine. It only means that Christ abstains from manifesting His full divine power through the body in order not to invalidate the latter.

Once more the quotations from St. Maximus show first that between the divine impassibility and the Son of God's suffering in the body there is no contradiction. Out of the ocean of divine power, equivalent to impassibility, there is manifested a ray of power in the suffering of the Son of God as man, which is also a strengthening of the human nature in bearing the passions.

Secondly, in this manifestation—a gauge of the ray from the divine power through the human body—and in its relation with us, we are shown once again the humbleness of *kenosis*, and at the same time its gracefulness. Everyone who sincerely cultivates these virtues assumes the example of the Son of God, who lowered Himself to the level of a servant and gave this example to human persons through deeds and words, acting gracefully toward them. St. Maximus the Confessor states, "Through imitation my blessed Master achieved meekness and humbleness; meekness, by quenching the sinful movements of anger and passion in order to become pleasant and endearing to men. For meekness is none other than unmoving of anger and passion toward what is contrary to nature; through it God's will is made known in those who have humbleness, so that by shattering the hardening of pride they may become thankful to God and easily accessible to the fellow human beings."[21]

Thus the *kenosis* of the Son of God has also the effect of destroying the egoistic disorder of anger and passion within human nature, so that it may become accustomed to humbleness, to meekness, and to gracefulness, through which the harmony, the respect, and the communication between persons can be reestablished. The Word of God has, through His humbleness, acquired a delicate accessibility in relation to human persons. In manifesting this accessibility through the human nature, He has planted in it the same delicate accessibility, achieving its true restoration because He has eliminated the violence and the egoistic rudeness that are manifested in exaggerated passions—which ignore others, in outbursts of anger—and in arrogant attitudes, which treat others as objects. This restoration of true humanity, or its development, coincides with the accord of our will with the will of God, who loves harmony among all. This state was fully realized in Christ through humbleness. And in this sense we, too, receive power from His power.[22]

In order to connect these virtues with the manifestation of the divine power, we mention that this power is evident in the fact that the sufferings and innocent passions of anger and of passion are borne by him who is humble and meek through patience, under the control of the will, in which the person is fully activated. These virtues never escape the control of the will. In this way humbleness and meekness, if not yet the expression of a complete strengthening in freedom, represent in any case a steady path toward freedom. By fully personalizing the human nature, Christ has liberated it from the reign of the tendencies of anger and passion that are manifested as automatic tendencies. Hence He has shown that human nature can escape the reign of this necessity. He has descended to the level of human things, but has done this through His will and has borne them through His divine will as well as through the human will strengthened by the divine will. Properly speaking, the suffering that enslaves is a break with nature. Through the pure suffering willingly accepted, the human person is restored in his authentic nature created for freedom:

> There is a fear in accord with nature and a fear contrary to nature. The fear in accord with nature is a power through which someone avoids danger; the one contrary to nature is an irrational avoidance. The one contrary to nature, as coming from thoughts that betray us, was not accepted by the Lord; the one in accord with nature, as one that shows the defending

> power found in Him who exists, was willingly accepted for us by the all-good One. For those that are natural to the will do not preexist in the Lord; when truly hungry and thirsty, He was not hungry or thirsty as we are, but in a manner above us, namely willingly. Similarly, He truly had fear not as we do, but in a manner above us. In general, what is natural in Christ had the mode above nature united with His reason in order to authenticate both the essence of reason and the economy of the mode.[23]

But the bearing of things of nature in a manner above the necessity of nature is again a form of the cooperation, or of communication, of the properties of the two natures. This is achieved only in and through the divine Person, as a form of actualizing the will of the two natures, as a subject who subjects the will of His inferior part to the will of the superior one and imprints the first with the latter without suppressing the inferior part. The restoration and the perfection of human nature is the work of the person, of the highest Person, who became its subject.

B. The Uniqueness of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos (Mother of God)

He who is born as man from the Virgin is God. The Church has always considered the Virgin Mary as Birthgiver of God, because in this is implied the confession that the one born of her is not a human person distinct from the divine Person, but that the very Son of God was born of her according to His human nature. Never is a nature born, but a hypostasis that, in the human order, is a person, if nature does not come into real subsistence except as a person. The Person born of the Virgin Mary is identical with the Person of the divine Word, who also becomes through the Incarnation the Person of the human nature.

Leontius of Byzantium uses a different reasoning for the unity of the Person who is born of the Virgin Mary; therefore, because this Person is God the Word, the uniqueness of His Person is manifested in the entire multiplicity of His acts, in every detail of His manifestations. "Corresponding to the domination of the divine part and humbly following the Holy Scripture, we call God the entire Christ, especially because the most proper characteristic of God is observed in all of Him, not only in one part. This is impassibility. Additionally, we know in all of Him the entire action worthy of God."[24]

Hence, of the Virgin Mary the Son of God Himself is born as the Person of the human nature. To reject this identity of the Virgin Mary means to reject the Incarnation of the Son of God or to contest that the very Son of God became man, and it further means denying that Jesus Christ is the very Son of God incarnate for an eternal dialogue with us, becoming toward this end a human person as well. To deny that the Virgin Mary is Birthgiver of God means to deny that the very Son of God became her Son, therefore the Son of Man. Why did Jesus Christ put such emphasis on His name as the Son of Man? If He were only man, this would have been a self-evident fact. He insisted on being called the Son of Man in order to show that, even though He is God, He Himself truly became the Son of Man. Only inasmuch as the very Son of God became the Virgin's Son did He become the Son of Man and the brother of human beings, and thus He made them children of God through grace. Only in this way did the very Son of God share in our sufferings and in our death, and thus He conquered them. Only in this way did He deify the human nature.

This is why St. Cyril of Alexandria combined the fight against Nestorius for a unique Person of Christ with the fight for the identity of the Virgin Mary as Birthgiver of God, because Nestorius strengthened his theory about the two persons in Christ with the negation of this title of the Virgin Mary, acknowledging her only with the name of "birthgiver of man" or "birthgiver of Christ."[25]

Following St. Cyril, Leontius of Byzantium also fought against the Nestorians for the identity of the Virgin Mary as Birthgiver of God.[26]

But even before St. Cyril, St. Gregory of Nazianzus said, "If anyone does not believe that St. Mary is Birthgiver of God, he is separated from God." According to him, our salvation depends on this.[27]

If the Son of God in the beginning gave man existence, addressing him as an *alter ego* of His subject, now He Himself becomes such a subject; but this does not mean that He ceases to be the creating Subject. He wants to make the transition in the dialogue with human beings from the position of partner outside their order to that within their order. For this purpose He can no longer make use of human persons, who are born from one another. He produces for Himself from the Virgin Mary a human nature of His own, as human subject. He Himself is born as man. This is not only a new act, but also a totally new beginning that is produced in the history of humankind. This new beginning could not have been produced by the human initiative, but only by the divine initiative.[28]

Another human subject, born the natural way of a man and a woman, would not have fulfilled the Son of God's plan to become Himself a human subject in dialogue with human beings, without ceasing to remain the Son of God at the same time. A birth as a result of human autonomy, namely out of a human pair capable of bringing into existence by inherently human powers another human person, would not have introduced—into the line of human persons—a human Person that would be at the same time a divine Person. The birth of the Son of God from the Virgin took into consideration the inability of humanity to be saved by its own power, to break through the closed horizon of humanity subjected to repetition and death, and to include all who are born of Christ according to grace within the line of those "born" of God.

From this point of view, the birth of God the Word as man is a unique birth, having nothing in common with the birth of the other human beings. "Neither the first birth [of Christ] 'from the Father,' nor the second, had anything in common with someone else's birth."[29] It is not a birth out of the necessity of nature, but out of God's good will.[30] It is the divine subject who is born freely as a man, not a man within the natural order. In fact, even the human person is not only born as an object, but also comes into being properly speaking as a subject, having from the first moment this active role in the formation of His nature, in His formation as a human being. The appearance of the human subject is explained as support of His human nature, or the appearance of the human nature with its self-support is explained in its support in the deeper Hypostasis of the divine Word; responding to the call of the Word of God, the human subject constitutes itself from the first moment as image and dialogue partner of the divine Word. But in Christ, the Word Himself becomes directly the Hypostasis of the human nature. Christ calls Himself into existence as man. The deeper Hypostasis of the human hypostases becomes this time directly the Hypostasis of Christ's human nature. In this way the birth of the Son of God as man surpasses even more the possibilities of nature. The fact of this miraculous birth is not a fact of nature, but a fact of the overwhelming of nature by the divine Spirit in a more complete way than in the birth of human beings. That is why in the Gospels and in the Symbols of Faith of the early Church, a decisive role in the conception and birth of the Son of God as man is attributed to the Holy Spirit. Man is fully constituted from the beginning of his existence through God's breathing of life, namely through the Holy Spirit. Even more so is the Word of God constituted as man through the cooperation of the Holy Spirit. Through the operation of the Holy Spirit, man is constituted as a subject through which the Spirit is affirmed as a factor superior to nature, and therefore not as an object; through the operation of the Holy Spirit, man is called to a dialogue with the Logos. In Christ, man finds the supreme fulfillment in his identity, as subject, with the Logos as divine subject, through the presence of the Holy Spirit Himself as a Person.

The Holy Fathers observe that if in the beginning God Himself could take only from Adam another human subject, why wouldn't He be able to take from a woman not a human subject, but only a human nature for Himself as subject? But if then He took in an instant a human subject from Adam—for man needed from the beginning a dialogue partner—now God the Word goes through the entire formation process of His nature, of His formation as man, as a new dialogue partner for man, with the exception of the human initiative for the birth. A human being could only form another human subject out of the immanent human line. St. Maximus the Confessor observes that through this mode of birth it is not only God who accepts temporality, which does not contradict His eternity, but also the human nature is restored to its original state, being overwhelmed by the divine Spirit through the fortification of the human spirit. For Christ as man comes into existence like Adam, through an act of divine creation, thus unstained with the sin of sensual pleasure. Christ remains in continuity with Adam's descendants as well, who came into existence through natural birth.

In Christ's case, the work of the Holy Spirit is not only a breathing of life as with the creation of the first man. In that case man, as the image of the Logos and as partner in the dialogue with Him, becomes a subject through his strengthening in the divine foundation of existence, or in the divine Word. In the beginning this fact had only the character of a grace, of an intimate relationship with God in which there was the power of his Personal strengthening. This time, human nature is hypostasized in the Word of God Himself through the work of the Holy Spirit. In the case of Adam's descendants, the work of the Holy Spirit at their birth and in their life has only the effect of their formation and strengthening as proper persons, as partners in the dialogue with the Logos. In Christ's case, the very Son of God becomes the subject of human nature through the work of the Holy Spirit. At the constitution of Christ, the divine Spirit as breathing of life is no longer communicated only in part, but wholly, and at the formation of the soul, or of the entire man as image of Christ, the same Spirit is not met by a human initiative that bears in itself the stain of passion. Now it is only the Holy Spirit who works in the plenitude of his operation. That is why this plenitude of the Spirit working from within the Word of God who becomes man has a much greater effect than the constitution and strengthening of man as hypostasis *per se*.

In Christ's case, the breathing of the Spirit does not only effectuate the establishing of a dialogue between man and the Word as between two subjects from unequal planes, but Christ Himself becomes a human partner in the dialogue with God, remaining at the same time the divine partner in this dialogue. If in the case of other human persons, human nature is constituted as hypostasis *per se* in a relationship with the Hypostasis of the Word, in Christ's case human nature receives God the Word as a direct hypostatic foundation, or as a mode of its subsistence. Not only is the human nature strengthened in the relationship with the divine Word as if with a distinct hypostasis, but it is also received within the hypostatic unity of the divine Word. The dialogue between man and God is taken over by the Son of God Himself.

St. Maximus the Confessor says that if the divine breathing that produces the soul in other human beings does not give the soul the power to form the body from the first moment in its virtual complexity without the man's seed, the incomparably more powerful breathing that produced Christ's human soul gave this soul the power to form the body without man's seed, even the power to imprint a total purity on the body. Its conception, thus, lacked the stain of sensual pleasure.[31] This more powerful breathing of the Spirit is due to the fact that the Spirit Himself as a Person produces it, and the Spirit indwells the Hypostasis of the Word. Thus the Word Himself forms, through the Spirit, the soul united with Him as His Hypostasis. Therefore, the Hypostasis of the Word Himself forms His body together with the Spirit, through the soul.

If Leontius of Byzantium attributes the formation of the body to the Spirit, it does not mean that this formation is not done through the soul as well. In fact, in the beginning the Spirit that hovered above the waters gave a materialized form to the reasons (inner principles) of the Word or to their images, bringing things into existence not without the will and the cooperation of the Word, and the soul as a subjective reason linked to the objective reason of the body is also placed by the Spirit in its work of forming the body. Likewise, we are to understand that the Spirit, through His more complete operation at Christ's constitution as man, while effectuating the union of the Word's Hypostasis with the soul and with the body, achieves together with the Logos the existence and the integration of the soul and body in the Hypostasis of the Logos, giving a role to the soul as well in the formation of the body. The Spirit is the ultimate factor who forms matter as the concretization of reason and who organizes it in proper units; therefore, He does the same with the body, and in a more complete manner with Christ's body. The Spirit is the one who also increases the presence of the spirit in the body, hence His presence and Personal operation in Christ's body. That is why He has a decisive role in the Resurrection of Christ's body and in its being completely filled with the Spirit.

Leontius of Byzantium says,

> The body takes its existence (ἥ οὐσίωσις) from the Spirit through His creating operation, and from the Birthgiver of God it took the matter of its substance; the Word indwelled in the temple created by the Holy Spirit from its first configuration, not waiting the perfection of the temple, but from the very beginning of the incomprehensible *oikonomia* (Incarnation), He clothed Himself with His creation by uniting Himself with the laboratory of nature. For it was not the body that was formed first so that He may enter it from outside, but He clothed Himself with it and imprinted our image on it.[32]

Thus the Spirit and the Word work together from the beginning; the Spirit does not create a body *per se*, but the body at whose formation the Spirit works is the body that the Word also forms for Himself through His impression on it as its Hypostasis. The Spirit gives it life, and the Word gives it the characteristic of His own body, His Personal identity, through its integration in Him as its Hypostasis.

We mentioned above that Christ remains in a continuity of nature with Adam's descendants. That is why He does not create His human nature out of nothing like at the beginning of creation, but from the Virgin Mary. Thus Christ assumes the nature of Adam's descendants in order to renew it from within. By this He offers a positive appreciation of the way in which they come into existence through birth. He does not eliminate this birth of other human beings but, once they come into existence, He purifies them of what was added to it as sin.

Thus, through His way of coming into existence as man, Christ unites the mode of coming into existence through creation with that of coming into existence through birth. In a way, even Adam's descendants united the mode of their coming into existence through birth with that of coming into existence through creation. For all were born on the basis of their forefathers' creation, and along with them they all received their soul as image of the Word through God's breathing of life, that is to say, through the communication of the Holy Spirit. Together with the soul they also received their placement in connection with God, in a dialogical relation with God the Word.

Christ takes from Adam through creation and from the complete breathing of the Spirit as a Person "the image of God," or His image; He takes from Adam's descendants through birth the blameless passions and the corruptibility as a result of sin, but not sin itself, for His birth is more closely united with Adam's creation and with the operation of the Holy Spirit; Adam, through his origin from God, did not incur sin.

This distinct birth of Christ was explained in the previous pages, in which we have seen the special operation of the Spirit in the Son's conception and birth as man.

The Holy Spirit, working in this way and contributing as a Person to the realization of the act through which the Son of God becomes the Hypostasis of the human nature, also works upon her who thus becomes Christ's Mother, as does the Word Himself, who forms His human nature out of her as a Person. But the Spirit's efficacious acting upon someone is in proportion to the purity or to the availability of the one upon whom He works. For purity means unreduced availability for God; it means integral commitment to the dialogue with God in the role of Him who responds and offers Himself. The Mother of the Lord offers herself fully to the Word, not only by her word, but by putting herself completely at His disposal. Thus the Spirit can entirely overwhelm the natural law of birth in her. He who gives in to sensual pleasure is not pure, is not fully available for God, for the Word, and is not in a state of spiritual lucidity and of responsibility before God. In such a person the power of the Spirit cannot overwhelm the natural law of birth. The Word of God cannot Himself form His body in a sovereign way, but in this case the body is formed through the law of nature and is stamped with sensual pleasure from the beginning of its formation. The Hypostasis of the Word cannot fully appropriate the body that is formed in such a way, and the body does not find its supreme fulfillment or the complete personalization in the Hypostasis of the Word, but remains partly not free, incompletely personalized and incompletely available for spirit.

The person who does not do everything, on his part, for purity, cannot be sanctified and overwhelmed by the Spirit. He who does not offer himself entirely to God in a complete liberation from passions cannot entirely receive God as a Person in order to find complete personalization in God. Leontius of Byzantium observes that the mothers of other prophets were also sanctified by the Spirit, and through this so were the prophets sanctified within their wombs (Jeremiah, John the Baptist, etc.). "But only the Birthgiver of God is particularly the one who had the Spirit Himself, who overshadowed and dwelt within her, and she gave birth to the one conceived as the Hypostasis of the body taken from her. For she did not give birth to someone sanctified, but to the Holy One who, by being born of her, also sanctified her."[33]

Through the descent of Christ as Hypostasis within her and as He began to form the body from her with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit as a whole Person, her body, which was kept by her in the purity of virginity and in the purity of total availability for God, is cleansed also of the original sin, so that the divine Hypostasis may not take His body from a body still under this sin and under the natural law of birth in sensual pleasure.

That is why the Mother of Him who formed His human nature from her, and upon whom He could work for the enhypostatization in Himself, as in God the Word, of the human nature that was being formed in her, had to be a virgin before conception, during conception, and at His birth. Mary's identity as Birthgiver of God and her virginity go hand in hand. If such a miracle happened to her, it was impossible for her not to remain afterwards completely dedicated to God, namely a virgin. The one who held in her arms the Son of God as man and who partook of His purity, as she partook of the liberation from the original sin in the moment of His dwelling within her, could not remain but a virgin at His conception as man.

If the Virgin Mary was able, through her purity, to bring a contribution to the Incarnation of the Son of God as man, to His assuming the human nature in Himself as Hypostasis, this is due to the fact that she alone fulfilled a power that God from the beginning "has planted in man against sin."[34] Through this "she covered the whole evil of men and showed them worthy of union with God and the earth worthy of God's walking on it."[35] She, too, had the original sin, but in and through her "the human being showed vigorously the power implanted in him against sin, avoiding all sin from the beginning until the end through attentive thought, correct decision, and greatness of wisdom."[36] "Through her beauty she showed God the common beauty of human nature"[37] and she "moved Him toward love for humans."[38] Properly speaking, she completely opened herself to God, and thus she was united with Him even before He perfected His union with her by forming His human nature out of hers. "Through her deeds she showed Him whom she later was to clothe with a body from her own body and thus to present Him to the eyes of all."[39] Humanity contributed, through her, to the "fullness of the time" of which St. Paul speaks, thus becoming apt for this insertion of God among the human persons through the assuming of our nature in His Hypostasis in view of its deification.

Nevertheless, His birth from a woman at this "fullness of the time" occurred under the law to redeem those who were under the law that we might receive the adoption (cf. Gal 4:4–6). Namely, the Son of God became man not only through creation, but also through birth, thus taking from our nature the innocent passions and the corruptibility resulting from sin, but without the sin. This has placed Him under the law of these consequences in order to overcome them and to liberate all His brothers and sisters under the law, or rather to change them from slaves of the law into free children of God. In this way He made the *kenosis* of accepting sufferings a means of liberation from them and of our adoption and deification.

In this sense and rejecting the affirmation of the Nestorians that Christ was brought into the temple forty days after His birth for His purification according to the law, because He was a simple man, Leontius of Byzantium declares that it was not He who needed the fulfillment of this law, but His brothers and sisters, whom He represented. For He Himself was the true purification of sin, and He took away the power of the law. "Due to the weakness of the law, which was weak on account of the body, God has sent His Son in the likeness of the sinful body; not only did He destroy the sin, but He also condemned it in His body. Having the strength of purity in His body woven with God, Christ fulfills all the righteousness of the bodily law in order to free the body's nature from the punishment of the law and from curse and to show it worthy of the spiritual existence which He gave to it."[40] Christ fulfills the law and eliminates it, as a painful consequence, by obeying it through *kenosis* and, therefore, also through birth in a body subjected to innocent passions and corruptibility. For He does not want to eliminate what in essence the law says, namely the fulfillment of God's will and of the order established by God in nature, to artificially and inorganically escape the law and the painful consequence of not fulfilling it. But He wants to escape that painful consequence represented by the law by fulfilling what God wants with it. Only through this fulfillment of the law can one escape in reality the law and the painful consequence of not fulfilling it. Leontius says that Christ did not seek to fulfill a law that He would not have fulfilled before and in such a case could not have fulfilled on account of the weakness of the body, which, according to this hypothesis, would have made Him break it.

"If He fulfills the law without having the need to do that (for the righteous have no need of repentance), evidently He does this to fulfill all the righteousness of His *oikonomia* according to the body and to show His divinity in the very act of fulfilling the law; once the bodily nature was lacking the power to fulfill the law, only the divine nature could fulfill it completely."[41] Evidently, it is not about the fulfillment of the law in the sense of an external satisfaction offered to God, but about the fulfillment of God's will and of the requirements of human nature through a life that brings back this nature to its true condition by its union with God.

In this way, between the Son of God's *kenosis* and His Incarnation or the identity of the Virgin Mary as Birthgiver of God, there is an internal connection, as in fact between all the implications of the Incarnation or of the union of the two natures in one Hypostasis. Leontius of Byzantium strongly connects the Son of God's *kenosis* and the deification of

His human nature to His birth from the Virgin Mary or to her identity as the Birthgiver of God. It is only because the one born of the Virgin was God that He has received our sufferings, overcoming them, and was able to rise again. As regards the Resurrection, he says that other dead persons cannot rise again because there is no more power in them after death. "How did He raise His temple after three days if, according to you [Nestorians], He was dead in the same way as others?" As regards *kenosis* he says, "We declare that in the hypostatic union of the Word with the body made from the beginning in the body of the Virgin, it was still the benevolence of the Word to make poor His natural [divine] glory in all His existence in the body, so that not through robbery or unjustly to exalt, through spotless living and after the death of the body, the humanity united with Him."[42]

C. The Sinlessness of Christ and His Veneration as God

Sin is the closing of the human person vis-à-vis God (as an infinite source of power), the will to not take Him into account, to forget about Him; it is enmity against Him. Sin is also closing vis-à-vis one's neighbors. And if the person is a factor in relationship, in opening up—and in this is comprised, in man's case, his humanity—sin means a weakening of the personal, or hypostatic, character of man, a weakening of his loving humanity.

Sin cannot exist in Jesus Christ, because in Him there is not a human hypostasis that can close itself off before the Personal God. His human nature has its real subsistence, therefore its concrete actualization, in the Hypostasis of the Word. That is why the divine Word, by hypostasizing our nature in Him and "cleansing it of all impurity by assuming it, has deified it through incarnation."[43] By this very fact He places our nature in the fullness of freedom from the sinful passions and in the actuality of its powers.

Christ's humanity is completely open to the Father and to the Holy Spirit and participates in the perfect communion of the Son with the Father and the Spirit. It cannot manifest any enmity toward God, for its Hypostasis is the very Son of God. Neither can it close itself off to its neighbors, for the divine Hypostasis in whom it really subsists has neither enmity toward men, nor any will to act against them, nor any fear of being limited by them. God is *par excellence* loving toward His creatures. One of the implications of the hypostatic union is that the human nature, by not subsisting in a hypostasis of its own, does not face the problem of affirming itself in competition with other human hypostases. Christ's human nature is open to all His brothers and sisters in humanity through the divine Hypostasis in which is comprised.

Not only did Christ not commit personal sins or acts contrary to God and His neighbors, but He also came into existence without original sin. As man, He was not the result of a sensual act, in which is manifested the fallen state of the human species under the necessity of this mode of reproduction and from which not even those cleansed of original sin can escape. He was the result of His own initiative, free of any necessity produced by such a sensual act. Thus, Christ's freedom from original sin results from the fact that He is born as man at the initiative He has as the Word of God, through the fact that He who is born as man from the Virgin Mary is God, or through the fact that she is Birthgiver of God. This means that He is born in a supernatural way, without the initiative of some pair of human beings. These two go hand in hand. One can also state the reverse: from the fact that Christ was without sin, it follows that He was God incarnate. For only God is without sin in the radical sense that He cannot sin. That is why it was necessary that the Son of God Himself become incarnate so that His body may partake of His impeccability, or of His impossibility to sin. Leontius of Byzantium strongly affirms this against the Nestorian idea that all those under God's sovereignty can liberate themselves from sin by simply fulfilling the law. He says that in this case "we all will be sinless, and the devil himself and all of us would obey the law, because we all are under God's sovereignty. [But in reality] by being subjected to sin and thus not being naturally apt for justification and for obeying God's law, the body could not be justified and obey God's law except through sharing in the sinless nature which can only be the divine nature."[44]

One could say that here we have an anthropological pessimism, similar to the Protestant one. Whereas in Protestantism man is forgiven without being transformed, here the belief is in humanity's real salvation from sin through sharing in the divine impeccability. Here we have a fundamental vision of the Holy Fathers applied to the theme of impeccability, according to which the divine nature is united with the human nature in the Person of Christ in order for the human nature to participate in the divine one, and for the divine nature to take upon itself human weakness.

Under the influence of Western theology, we became accustomed to no longer seeing the union of the two natures in all its efficiency, but only their coming together under the aegis of a Hypostasis that, in its identity as man and God, can represent us humans before God and can satisfy in our place God's offended honor or can bear the punishment in our place. Under the influence of the thesis that there can be no union between distinct natures, we thought that we should not admit any communication between them. In fact, we must avoid both the extremity that confuses the two natures in their union and that of keeping them in the separation of non-communication. They communicate through their energies (their theandric operation).

So it is with the powerful deeds performed through the body. Oftentimes what the human nature offers is more the medium that must be deified; in this case what the nature brings is a "suffering" of deification, which nevertheless is also an acceptance. Other times, the one Hypostasis accepts, even though it is also the Hypostasis of the divine nature, certain sufferings from the human nature. Thus, the natures communicate reciprocally in many ways through their energies.

Leontius of Byzantium, in comparing the resurrection of certain human persons with Christ's Resurrection, says that those were raised through the operation (energy) of God as another person, whereas Christ raised His body through His own operation (He Himself being at work = ἐνεργοῦντος). For He was bearing the divine nature, which was the source of this energy:

> It is evident that these were raised from the dead by the power of God and through the Holy Spirit, who has dominion over life and death, except the Lord alone, who is by nature life-giving Spirit. In fact only in Him as God there was life, and He dies and rises up again, descends into hell, and ascends. It is therefore evident that, by the fact that He raised Himself from the dead, the Lord has manifested as the Son of God, not dying with His divinity—for He was immortal—but operating (ἐνεργών) on His part through His own divine operation (energy) and making alive His mortal part. This is the overwhelming glory of God's power directed toward us who believe, that He raised Him from

> the dead through the operation (κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν) of the dominion of His power that He operated (ἥν ἐνήργησεν) in Christ. This He has also placed in us through the partaking of His holy Body and will make alive our bodies after death through His divine Spirit dwelling in us.[45]

"It is evident that it is the power of the Lord that raises other bodies from the dead, so much more did He raise His own body with which He was united according to Hypostasis." On the other hand, through other operations or sufferings of His, "it was God Himself who humbled Himself until death, not someone else or through someone else."[46]

It is evident that in Christ as a unique Person, the communication through energies is different from the communication of energies between persons bearing different natures (between God and man), or a common nature (between humans). This is about a reciprocal communication of the energies of two distinct natures united in a single Person. In every operation performed or suffered by this Person through one nature is felt the basis of the other nature being represented, just as in raising a finger or in the pain of a finger the whole nature of the human person, soul and body, participates in a certain degree, each one bringing its own corresponding contribution, completing and shaping the movement or the suffering of the other without annihilating its reason. This is the communication through the energy of the natures coexisting in one unique Person; it is a sort of interpenetration of theirs, the effect of which is the communication of powers from one to the other.

Thus the divine nature in its real existence in Christ's Hypostasis communicates impeccability to the human nature. In its turn, the human nature gives the Hypostasis that bears its divinity the innocent human passions, or sufferings. But the divine nature, in its real existence in Christ, represents, through its impeccability, a filter through which sinfulness is melted away, the sinfulness in which those innocent passions could be activated. Due to the fact that Christ's human nature receives impeccability from the divine nature, the innocent passions communicated through it to the God-bearing Hypostasis are blameless.

St. Maximus the Confessor demonstrated how the weakening of nature through sin has brought about the innocent passions that are almost always activated in association with sin. It seems that to a certain degree these innocent passions also existed in the primordial state, but instead of being overcome through the intensification of the Spirit's operation in human nature, they developed through the weakening of the operation of the Spirit and that of the human nature as well. On the other hand, the will of the human nature that is activated through its own hypostasis in the human person takes in him the form of decisions made by the free will. In this free will (γνώμη) is given the possibility of the sinful activation of innocent passions, or of nonresistance to their inclination to be activated in a sinful way. *St. Maximus considers that there was no human free will in Christ because there did not exist in Him a human subject to make decisions separate from God,* but only the nature's natural will, which made concrete decisions through the Hypostasis of the incarnate Word and which did not have a free will that could have chosen sin. The Hypostasis of the Word was always activating the will in conformity with nature, something that was in conformity with His divine will as well.

It is necessary to specify that even though the human nature assumed by God the Word had in itself only the natural will in motion, due to the fact that it was weakened after the original sin and thus suffered the innocent passions in a more accentuated form than in the primordial state—and in this is shown its unity with our nature—its natural will was under the pressure of hunger, thirst, fear of death, just like ours. That is why His human will had to fight against these innocent passions in order to remain in conformity with the divine will. Certainly God the Word strengthened His human will with the power irradiating from His divine nature, but He did not want to overwhelm it through this power in such a way that the human will no longer had to fight. The divine will strengthened the human will through the one Hypostasis so that the human will could still want, in order to not make it insensitive to innocent passions; that is, the divine will did not diminish these innocent human passions directly. He who does not want is no longer a human person, or is no longer a strong human person, a worthy partner of God, but an object in His hand. This fight is also fought to a certain extent by humans.

It is in this way that we should understand that the innocent passions, or sufferings, including corruptibility as impulse of these innocent passions and as their consequence, are not only consequences of sins, but also instruments against sins.[47]

They are also punishments for sin, not brought by God, but rather as consequences of man's breaking the relationship with God, the source of life. Once they came to be, God gives them the condition as antidote to sin. "It is not reasonable for goodness to take pleasure in an atrocity and in death," says Nicholas Cabasilas.[48] On the contrary, it is reasonable for goodness to change evil into good. "Yet wounds, pain, and death were from the beginning devised against sin! . . . This is the reason that God permitted death and pain as soon as sin had entered in, not so much to inflict a penalty on the guilty but rather to supply a remedy for him who had fallen into sickness."[49] Death came "so that sin may not be immortal."[50] Commenting on this teaching of Nicholas Cabasilas, a Greek theologian says, "As soon as death appeared in creation, God had used it as He wished, out of His own initiative, and had radically changed its nature by using it differently."[51] Or, "By allowing death, the loving God turns it against corruptibility and puts an end through natural death to corruptibility and to its cause, which is sin."[52]

This positive use of innocent passions, of corruptibility, and of death is inserted in them because God has inserted in our nature a defensive instinct. By using this instinct in a healthy way and seeing the eternal ruin that these innocent passions, corruptibility, and death prepare for him, the believing person turns away from sin in order to take away the nourishment that sustains the innocent passions. This struggle is required by the law implanted in his nature and by the positive law given by God. The law given by God corresponds with the one in nature, which in turn is strengthened and developed by the former. The human being cannot by his own power fulfill this law and consequently cannot escape the power of the innocent passions, sufferings, corruptibility, and death, because he cannot escape the power of sin. Only through Christ, who has conquered sin, is the law fulfilled and the nature escapes the power of innocent passions, corruptibility, and death. Only through Christ is the human being no longer under the power of the law, which lasts as long as the unfinished struggle against sin. The human being cannot fulfill the law alone and cannot escape it, as he cannot escape death, because the innocent passions of his body are linked to sin. "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24). Christ has conquered sin in His body, and by partaking of Him we, too, will conquer it together with the law and death. "Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death" (Rom 7:4–5).

Thus, if the purpose of innocent passions and death was effectively changed, it was changed only in and through Christ, who had no sin connected to them.

However, they cannot be overcome without bearing them. Only in being borne without letting sin taking root did they lose their power. In a body without needs or without sensibility to pain, the will would not be strengthened to bear the innocent passions without sin, and that body would not do away with their power through its will. He who has no need to eat would not have the occasion to conquer the pleasure or the greed that arise from it; he who has no sensibility for pain, for the fear of death, does not have the opportunity to conquer them by the strengthening of the will. Because in Christ the will was hypostasized in God the Word, it had from Him the power to keep the satisfaction of His bodily needs undeveloped into pleasure and to keep in check the pain produced by blows or the fear produced by the prospect of death, so that because of them He would not resort to acts of cowardice or of betraying God's will and the values willed by Him.

The secret of not sinning and not being able to sin was in Christ in the power that His human will received from the Hypostasis of the Word, who was its subject; it was also due to the fact that He was born without original sin and furthermore due to the fact that His will was not constituted like the free will of an autonomous human person, which is alone under the pressure of the propensities of human nature and which has at its disposal only its powers weakened by sin. The fact that His will was able to want more firmly did not eliminate the need to truly want, to truly put into practice the power to want more firmly. On the other hand, Christ did not give His human nature through *kenosis* so much power as to make the effort of its will useless. For He wanted every man to keep in check, like He did, the satisfaction of the innocent passions within the limits of the strict necessities of nature. He often gave His human nature and will only as much power as was necessary for the other human beings to keep these innocent passions within the limits of the nature's necessities.[53] Human beings developed the habit of going beyond the strict satisfaction of the necessities of nature, thus falling into sin. These habits did not exist in Christ. Those who have Christ in them have Him together with His impeccability and are able to conquer these habits with His help. Nevertheless, these habits do not always make them conquer their falling into sin on account of the satisfaction of necessities. But they could do it were they to make use of their will as did Christ. To them is communicated Christ's same will enhypostasized in God the Word. By keeping their innocent passions in the same strict satisfaction within the limits of natural necessities, they, too, empty them of power and prepare for themselves the resurrection to a life without suffering and corruptibility, as did Christ.

If they do not always succeed in avoiding sin, in the union with Christ's resurrected and all-pure body they will share in His Resurrection to the life free of suffering and corruption. Those who believe in Christ are also able to conquer the falling into sin while satisfying the nature's necessities, because the root of sin in their nature is destroyed by the presence within them of Christ's sinless body. In fact, the same will of Christ is in them united with their will in order to conquer the habits left in their nature.

These innocent passions, or sufferings, together with corruptibility and with death following sin, represent the curse Christ identified Himself with, taking it upon Himself in order to redeem us from the curse of the law (Gal 3:13).[54]

Through these innocent passions He knew in His own body the consequences of sin, but at the same time He has rendered empty their power and that of sin by separating them from sin, because the innocent passions and sin stimulate each other reciprocally. He has also destroyed the power of sin in His fellow human persons and through this diminished the power of the innocent passions in them, not from the outside, but by causing the power for this purpose to irradiate from within Him, because He destroyed in Himself the entanglement between innocent passions and sin. By offering Himself to be partaken of by others as the One who has conquered the innocent passions as both fruit and source of sin, He gave them the power to do the same and thus untied in their earthly life the unconditional link between sufferings and sins, bearing the first without sin in order to destroy the power of both.

Because we conquer both the innocent passions and sin by partaking of His all-pure body, which kept in check the innocent passions resulting from sin without allowing them to slide into sin, one can say that Jesus bore the passions and death for our sin in order to save us from sin.

But the link between innocent passions and our sin is even stronger, and therefore His death for our sin has a deeper meaning. The pains He suffered are not only pains as a result of our sin, but also pains for our sin. On the basis of full solidarity with us—because He is the divine Hypostasis of human nature and as such totally distinct from any hypostasis capable of closing itself off to others—Christ made Himself the human center that is no longer subject to any tendency of selfish limitation through free will, but is totally open toward others, giving them, too, this power through their partaking of His nature. He has obtained this victory over sin through the effort of bearing the passions without sliding toward selfish preservation. He has thus achieved through suffering a union with us that remains to be accepted in turn by us, allowing us to assume His victory over the sin of separation.

He suffered our sin and conquered it as if it were His. In this way He assumed our sin and suffered because of it, without Himself committing it; He suffered even more than we do because in His perfect love, or in the lack of any egoism, He had a much deeper sensibility toward the evil represented by sin. He therefore suffered for the sin of all, whereas a simple human person, even when suffering for sin, suffers more for his own sin than for that of his relatives or of other human persons.

In connection with this, one could point out a paradox: on one hand, He was open to all, but they were not open to Him, and this made Him suffer, whereas they did not suffer for the opaqueness of others. But at the same time He realized that the nature He assumed from their nature could not reach full transparence and the power to free them from any opaqueness until it passed through the death of the body's present form. Until then humanity could not reach even in Him the fulfillment of the full transparence for others, thus of the full power to bring others into communion with Him and among themselves.

Thus the sin of others, as their hardened opaqueness toward Him, weighed down on Him, or it was experienced by Him with an extreme sensitivity. On the other hand, in His openness toward God He wished to have all others open together with Him toward God. But they were not. This was also on account of the fact that their body, subject to thickness as a result of sin, was not completely transparent toward God and in their relationships. This made Him again suffer for the sin of all, because on account of the body, or its propensities toward selfish pleasures, they continually refused to become sensitive to His love. Their opaqueness toward God was difficult to overcome, and because of this neither could God be made transparent toward human beings. Thus Christ remained on one hand, through His human nature, in a sort of solitude, and on the other hand in a sort of solidarity in suffering with all sinners for the universal sin. He had to fight for the annihilation of the universal sin as for His own cause in order to annul the cause of His suffering because He appropriated their suffering on account of sin as His own. His suffering on account of the sin of all—given in the bearing of innocent passions, and His Passion and death—was at the same time paradoxically a suffering for their salvation from sin, because it was a pure suffering. And only a pure suffering for sin, unmixed with personal sin, can destroy sin whose weight He also bears out of solidarity with them and out of the inability to fully achieve communion with them through a total transparence of the body.

Therefore, this suffering of His for the sin of human beings had to go on until the death of His earthly body in order for it to reach its Resurrection and its complete transparence for them. This suffering for their sin, which was greater than everyone else's, made Him, in contrast, capable of willingly accepting death in order to fully overcome the universal sin. Furthermore, this death as passing toward Resurrection was necessary also to make His body fully transparent for God and thereby to make God Himself and His humanity fully transparent directly to human beings and consequently their humanity through a spiritual imitation of His death by those who believe in Him. Hence it had to have a direction toward both God and human beings.

In this sense, St. Cyril of Alexandria in his work *Adoration in Spirit and in Truth* emphasized the fact that one can enter into God's presence only in a state of pure sacrifice, and no human being could do this on his own because of sin. Only Christ as man without sin was able to enter into God's presence as a pure sacrifice, and only in Him can we do the same. If sin is egoism, the egoism of spiritual pride or of physical pleasure, the opposite of sin is the perfectly pure sacrifice. In the perfectly pure sacrifice that Christ was able to offer through lack of sin on behalf of human persons, one sees that Christ was, through this sacrifice and through His inability to sin, "the man for other men." This shows that without the inability to sin and without the suffering for our sin as the cause of the non-transparence and mortality of the body, and without the will to conquer these consequences of sin, Christ could not have saved us. Through His inability to sin, Christ as fully man was transparent to God and to men through the full service offered to God and by bearing full responsibility before God on behalf of men. And this made Him suffer for the sin of others and also made Him overcome this state through death for God and for men.

Christ is due a single adoration similar to God because the adoration is directed toward the Person, and Christ's Person is one: the incarnate Son of God. The adoration is part of a dialogue, and there is no dialogue except from person to person. There can be no dialogue between person and nature, be it the nature of a person or even that of Jesus Christ's Person. However, the Person in Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God. It was He whom the Apostle Thomas worshiped: "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). Jesus Christ, even in His humility, appeared as "loving God by nature, becoming through His willing birth of a woman accessible to us. That is why we offer Him a single adoration together with the Father and the Spirit."[55]

If we offered Christ two kinds of adoration, we would divide Him in two persons. But how would we divide Him? Where would we draw the dividing line between them? We have seen before in a text of Leontius of Byzantium that Christ's unique Person is visible even in the smallest detail of its manifestation. If we wanted to divide Him into two persons without being able to find the dividing line between these persons, it would follow that we would be able to see the divine Person through the intermediary of the human person, and this would mean that Christ did not rise to the direct relationship with God, but was left in the indirect relationship with God through a man, as through the prophets of the Old Testament. As such, in this case Christ, as a person like the other human persons, would only be worthy of veneration similar to that of a saint. Thus the adoration offered to the Son of God would no longer be directed toward the real Person of Christ.

Leontius of Byzantium offers yet another reason for a single adoration given to Christ as God. The one Christ is worshiped wholly as God through the fact that because the one Hypostasis in Him is divine, the human nature is also hypostasized and thus deified in Him. If only one half of Christ were to be worshiped as God, the one Hypostasis that is fully God, only not fully man, would be divided in two, and His entire extension into the deified human nature would be negated. Therefore only half of God would be acknowledged, and that half would no longer be true God. Leontius said to the Nestorians,

> If your Christ is only partly the Son of God, and partly He is God but not entirely, then He is only half God. But for us the one Christ is worshiped entirely as God. For one of the parts in Him, the complete one, is perfectly divine according to nature, while the other part is deified by being united with Him through participation according to nature. If you, on account of the fact that Christ has only one divine part according to nature, infer that He is only half God, in fact you do not know Him either fully or partly as divine through nature; thus, it is evident that He is not completely God and you know Him as a simple man similar to us.[56]

As can be seen, the Holy Fathers stress the unity of the Person in all the implications of the hypostatic union. In Christ nothing remains outside the unity of the Person without the Person's mark and presence. Christ is God Himself present in the plane accessible to us. That is why the Son of God became incarnate: so that He can make Himself present in a direct relationship, or in a direct dialogue, with us. This direct presence of God as Person can be covered by the presence of the human person.

His direct presence as God is too overwhelming to not be experienced all the time. This experience by believers takes the form of worship. To view Him in a parallel way or in certain moments as man would mean to not experience all the time His overwhelming presence as God, but to detach from Him the person of a mere man to be regarded entirely as a mere man, with consideration given Him as to any other man. Christ, however, does not have one half that is simply man, and one can never regard half of His Person as a mere man.

Nevertheless, in the adoration given Him as God we make no abstraction of the fact that He is also man.

Christ is not a double hypostasis, but the same Hypostasis has a double quality: God and man. Being true God and true man, Christ Himself as man does not worship Himself, for in this case He would act as having a double hypostasis. Even in the state of tiredness, of not knowing the day of His Second Coming, of prayer to the Father, of fulfilling the commandments He gave to others, Christ has at the same time the consciousness that He is the Son of God. In the most extreme *kenosis*, He knows Himself as God in a descending state.

A more or less concomitant association of two kinds of adoration, on our part, of this unique subject would not be appropriate; only one kind of adoration is appropriate: one in which, being penetrated by the consciousness that Christ is fully God, one feels this God at the same time as close as the one who became man and is accessible to all human beings. In the adoration given to Christ as God, one does not experience Him as a God who is distant and inconceivable, but as a God who came close to us and remains as such unto the ages of ages. This God understands us, became familiar to us; we can have toward Him an audacity based on His love, manifested in the fact that He became man and entered into relationship with us as a man from among us. But this audacity does not go as far as considering Him a mere man. In this case, we would not have in Him the evidence of God's extraordinary love toward us, neither would our love have the warmth to which we do not want to place any limit. When we address Jesus we say, "Sweetest Jesus, Jesus, the most loved warmth, give me warmth!" But at the same time we do not forget to say, "Jesus, the Almighty, Jesus most glorified!" We call Him "sweetest Jesus" precisely because we know that Jesus the Almighty descended to us out of love and is capable of being sweeter than any other man can be.

We know Jesus as having sovereignty over all things, but also as a lamb slaughtered for us. He is our Master, but a Master who touches our hearts through the fact that He became and remains a slaughtered lamb, without ceasing to be Master. "Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!" (Rev 5:13). He is the Lord because He is the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world; He is the Lamb who in fact takes away the sins of the world because He is almighty God, but almighty in His love. He obliges us in our conscience; He draws from us the willing, the deepest, and the total adoration because He is our total, most exemplary servant with the fullest efficacy. "And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:27–28).

That is why we offer Him the most total adoration, accompanied by the deepest love. The incarnate Son of God revealed to us the mystery of the serving lordship and concomitantly the paradoxical combination between the deepest adoration and the warmest love. There is no contradiction between true lordship and service, but rather, they constitute an apparent paradox. It is the sin of pride that separated these two and created a contradiction between them. For sin separates all in the spiritual and sensible order, thus creating a false or a forced order. Only the sin of pride separated our heart from God, and if we worship Him, we do it out of fear. Christ has reestablished the true worship of God and of Himself by revealing to us the loving God. We offer worship to Christ, as to God, with much more love because He became the Son of Man, thus making us His brothers and children of the all-good, heavenly Father. Before the Son of God became man and received death on the cross for us, He was not known and was not all glorified by the entire creation, although He became known and all glorified after that.

Since the apostolic period, the Church has included Jesus Christ in its doxologies together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He has ever since been accorded the appellation *Lord*, corresponding to *Yahweh* in the Old Testament (2 Cor 13:14; Gal 1:3; 2 Pet 3:18; etc.). In the adoration offered to Christ as God is implied His equality and unity with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. That is why in all doxologies of the Church He is glorified together with the Father and the Spirit. In the hymn after the second small litany in the Divine Liturgy, we call Christ "one of the Holy Trinity, glorified together with the Father and the Holy Spirit."

This means that by the fact of His becoming man, there was no fissure introduced in the Son's equality to and being of one essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Even though He is man, Jesus Christ preserves His eternal position within the Holy Trinity. Even though He became man, He remains in the eternal unity of nature with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and in this position He has the glory He had before the world was (John 17:5). It is a glory that is spread over all people united with Christ. He is the Pantocrator in human body. In His bright eyes "like a flame of fire" (Rev 19:12) shines the infinity of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. Also through His eyes is manifested to us His infinite divine love. We are "called . . . for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess 2:14). By acknowledging that Christ receives as man, too, the glory equal to that of God, we confess our faith that in Him we will also partake of this glory. He is the bridge between the Father, with whom He is of one essence according to divinity, and us, with whom He is of one essence according to humanity. We have all of God's gifts for eternity in Him and through Him. In Him are hidden all the treasures reserved for us in eternity.

By becoming man, the Word of God did not multiply the hypostases of the Trinity; neither did He break His unity of essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Leontius of Byzantium says,

> The Word being whole as Person and as Hypostasis (for the threefold number is made up of Hypostases, not of natures), the One who existed before without the body was incarnate, and it is Christ who is in communion of essence and One according to nature with the good Father and the Holy Spirit, united with them according to essence; and we bring neither multiplication nor diminution of the Hypostases in the Holy Trinity, if the Word was one Hypostasis before and after the Incarnation. For the Holy Scripture does not show that He lacked Hypostasis before Incarnation. But He kept the one that He had even after He added the nature He did not have . . . He is (even afterwards) One together with the other two Persons according to the common possession of one of the natures in Him, but not according to both natures. The fact that He does not have communion with another according to all that He has, does not mean that He does not have communion with Him.[57]

Even after the Incarnation, Christ remains one Hypostasis of the three Hypostases in the Holy Trinity in communion of essence with them, even though He enters as man into communion of essence with us, too. Neither His Hypostasis nor His divine nature was altered through the Incarnation. Therefore, even though this Hypostasis assumed the human nature, He is glorified as divine Hypostasis together with the Father and the Holy Spirit and as such is in an interpersonal relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Through the fact that the same Person of Christ is in communion of essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit and also in communion of human essence with us, He actualizes the communion of essence with us in the same culminating love that is realized in the unity of essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Being ontologically as united with us according to human nature as He is with the Father and the Holy Spirit according to divine nature, He is likewise united with us as He is with the Father and the Holy Spirit, even though toward the Father He also has obedient love as man and toward us the love as an operation for the raising of our nature.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ONE WORK OF SALVATION: JESUS AS PROPHET AND TEACHER

The connection between Christ's Person and His work of salvation is shown in the fact that His work of salvation, directed toward His human nature, is manifested in the implications of the union of the two natures in His one Person. Thus, it can be said that these implications constitute the internal content of His saving acts. His saving acts represent a concretization and a more visible manifestation of these implications.

In the simple order of human life, there are works that, regardless of who performs them, have in and of themselves important repercussions for other persons. A certain person founded a state, an institution; has formulated a doctrine, has created a work of art; these continue to influence, in and of themselves, the lives of other human persons.

We do not obtain salvation, however, through such works performed by a certain human person who may have established an institution or accomplished a body of work with an extended effect in one way or another. Jesus Christ Himself saves as an *irreplaceable Person* because His identity as a divine Person become accessible as man is the unique source of power that liberates us from sin and from its consequences, among which the gravest is death. We cannot obtain salvation except in God, or as making eternal our personal relation with Him, a relation through which the gifts and the powers of the true and inexhaustible life are communicated to us and we receive them freely.

That is why Christian dogmatics is not a system of ideas as rigorous precepts before which the human person finds himself alone with his own powers. These systems cannot express more than what the limited human person can think, and they cannot offer him a power higher than himself in order to overcome the state of his insufficiency.

Christian dogmatics presents the saving and eternal life-giving work of the divine Person of Christ become man, as well as our free relationship with Him through whom we can receive this life without end. It is this Person and the relation with Him that salvation, or the liberation of man from his insufficiency and mortality, depends on. Christianity does not leave us within the framework of our human, limited powers, nor does it speak to us about imaginary impersonal powers of which we could make use through certain techniques, but about the incarnate God's real Person that above all is the source of all life, of the perfect and eternal life. This Person proved to us His existence and interest toward us through the relationship in which He entered with us in history in order to remain in this relationship unto the ages of ages. Therefore, *in Christianity one cannot properly speak of a "saving teaching," and we are not saved through a certain law, not even through the Old Testament law, but through the Person of Jesus Christ.* He is "the end of the law" (Rom 10:4). That is why He is called "the Savior." No other founder of a religion is or is called Savior, but rather the legislator or the teacher of that particular religion.

Without a doubt, the Person of Christ is the Savior because He is the Son of God. For only in God is there the power of salvation and eternal life. And only because He is the Son of God can His love toward men be explained. Only because He works upon us out of the loving communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit does He bring us the salvation in which the entire Holy Trinity is active with its love. Human beings are saved not as some objects, but through the free acceptance of communion with Christ, and in Christ with the entire Holy Trinity. Thus, the entire salvation has the mark of personal relations between Christ and human beings, and through Him, between the Holy Trinity and human beings. Christianity is "personalistic," meaning that salvation of the human person comes through the supreme Personal being. Christianity believes in the eternal value of person.

The Person of Christ saves us through a work directed toward our transformation, through performing certain transforming acts or by making His love effective through such acts. Thus, only Christ as an irreplaceable Person can save us, but only He can save us because only He can perform the works of salvation required for this purpose. There is an indissoluble bond between His Person and His works of salvation. The latter are the result of the first. Certainly, this does not subject Christ to a natural necessity inscribed in His Person. But His Person implies the free involvement of the loving God in the work of our salvation. By freely willing to become man in order to save us, He implicitly willed to go all the way in achieving our salvation; He willed to go until the end in rendering our humanity a medium of saving power over us.

His works have as a plus the meaning that through them the divine supreme Personal being has best demonstrated, through their historicity, His real existence and also the fact of His entrance as man into relationship with us in history; He demonstrated that He became even more concretely "historic," suffering on account of certain factors of history and overcoming the revolt of some against Him as well as their will to keep everything in its closed horizon.

The Person of Christ is present in the works of salvation and they cannot belong to someone else. The Person is present in these works because He cannot remain without being active in these works, without realizing Himself through them as man. If on the plane of the ephemeral human existence only the relationship with another person can offer us certain warmth in life, a certain sense and reason for living, the eternal life as well as its meaning and whole reason cannot come but from the divine Person who entered into direct relationship with us through the fact that He became a human person.

The person of my fellow human being means more for me than all his works, but he does not work or prove his radiating force except through his manifestations. Because Christ-the-man is also God, He is incomparably more than any other person, more than all His works. But these works are the manifestations representing the evidence for the Person of Christ and His love. Moreover, in the case of Christ, His Person is everything as no human person can be. But just as the human person is more than his works because he is not static—he is not exhausted in the works performed, but is shown through those works as a source of love and life that is more than they—so the Person of Christ as God and man is everything because He is not static and did not exhaust His reality in His works of salvation during the course of earthly life; through those works He has shown us that He will be forever active in the spirit of those works, that He will be forever present in the validity of those works. Those works are the culminating expression of His love, and they achieved in Him a state of permanent irradiation of His love. As such they are always actual in relation to us, or better said, the very Person of Christ incessantly manifests His culminating love through them, or He manifests Himself as an infinite and inexhaustible source of love. "The crucified and risen Christ, not death and resurrection as theological themes, constitute the center of the Apostle Paul's theology."[1] The works performed by a person are imprinted upon that person with their consequences. The relationships with other persons also feel the effects of the conditions inscribed in that particular person by his works by transmitting those conditions to the other persons.

Christ's work of salvation is directed toward His human nature, which He fills with His divinity and liberates from the innocent passions, the sufferings, and the death resulting from the original sin. It is then directed toward us all in order that, through our participation in the divinity manifested in the power that He transmits to us through His human nature, He may liberate us, too, from sin in this life and from the innocent passions, corruptibility, and death in the life to come. Also through these, His work is directed toward God in order to glorify Him through our reconciliation with Him (Eph 2:16; 1:19–20), through our liberation from the deficiencies mentioned and through our clothing in the divine illumination. Even though the directions of this work are three, the work itself is not divided. The work of restoration and deification of the human nature is at the same time a work of glorifying God, for in the restored and deified human nature is manifested God's glory and the nature itself glorifies God. The glorification of God is also manifested in the liberation of human beings from sin. For they cease to be God's enemies once Christ has reconciled them with God through His body, namely through the divine powers extended to them through His body; "therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor 6:20).

The direction of His work of salvation toward human beings is an extension of His work of salvation upon His human nature. Even in the work of salvation upon His human nature is implied the intention to extend it toward other human beings and to glorify God through their liberation from sin and through filling them with His divine life.

Christ's work is a unitary whole, but the directions or intentions are three. And only by fulfilling these three intentions is its saving goal accomplished.

Christ's work of salvation can be considered from these three aspects. But because they are not divided, one cannot be considered apart from the other two. Christ's work of salvation can also be regarded from its other three main aspects. It is accomplished through the very sacrifice of His own body, through the teaching and His example of service given to human beings as well as through the power He exerts upon nature through miracles, upon death through Resurrection, and upon human beings through the commandments and the power He gives them for salvation. Because He exerts these three kinds of activity as aspects of His one work of salvation, Jesus Christ was considered from the beginning as High Priest (Heb 9:11); as Teacher-Prophet; and as Master, Lord, or King (Rev 12:10; 11:15; Matt 28:18; etc.).

These three qualities are both His ways of ministry and dignities of His. They are also undivided. He sacrifices Himself by overcoming the consequences of sin, He teaches by serving, He rules as a slain lamb (Rev 5). They cannot really be divided, because in each one the other two are implied. However, in each one of the three kinds of activity, one or the other is put into bold relief, the other two being implied in it.

On the other hand, these three forms of ministry are combined with the three directions of Christ's one work of salvation. The priestly ministry is directed toward His own body as well as toward God and human beings; His exemplary deeds and His life as a model are directed as a materialized teaching toward human beings as well as toward God and His own human nature. Even though the teaching He offers is directed mainly toward human beings, it is also the fulfillment of His obedience to the Father and an emphasis on the Father's will and on His glory, being at the same time praise to God, a service given to Him. Finally, through the power exerted upon nature, upon death, and upon human beings, Christ always glorifies the power of God in Trinity, which is proper to Him, and at the same time shows the power He has given to His own body.

In His entire work, Christ manifests His threefold relation with His human nature, with the Father, and with the human beings, and He manifests through all this work His threefold ministry as Teacher-Prophet, High Priest, and King.

As the Son of God who was incarnate in order to raise us to the dialogue, or to the direct communion, with Him, He is and manifests Himself also as man in the obeying relationship with the Father and fills His human nature with His divinity, realizing and actively promoting His relationship with human beings. These directions of His work of salvation are the natural, although willing, irradiations of His Person, which is united in the highest degree with the Father through the divine nature and the deified human nature as well, and with the human beings through the deified human nature. Only through His threefold operation performed in these three directions can He fully accomplish His work of salvation.

On the other hand, only through the three operations or qualities—Teacher, High Priest, and King—could He save human beings and make them perfect, and only through all three of them together, exercised in a pure and eminent way as no average human person can exercise. Human beings have to be enlightened in order to willingly walk the path that leads them to God; they have to overcome the enmity between themselves and God by giving up their pride and their egoistic pleasures, namely by actively living in a state of sacrifice, which they could not have done except in the direct relationship with a Person that was able to offer a pure sacrifice, a sacrifice capable through its intensity of destroying the consequences of sin. Finally, they have to be sustained with the power that is higher than the simple human power, on the path of a sacrificing life made known to them through the all-true and all-illuminating teaching.

The three directions of the one work of salvation and the three forms of ministry toward its completion flow naturally from the Person of the Son of God, who was incarnate, assuming the role of the Savior of the world.

One can invoke reasons for the order in which they can be presented. This means that no decisive reasons can be invoked for either of them. There is, however, a temporal and a real order of Christ's saving works even if all of them belong in a more or less accentuated degree to the three directions of His one work of salvation and to His three forms of ministry dedicated to salvation.

In choosing the order of presenting Christ's three forms of ministry for salvation we will, therefore, take into consideration the traditional practice by first presenting His ministry as Teacher-Prophet, then the one as High Priest, and finally the one as King, also showing in each of them the implication of the other two and at the same time keeping in mind the chronological and real order of the saving works in each of the three ministries.

Jesus Christ is the supreme Teacher and Prophet through His own Person. Jesus Christ is not a teacher like any other man, or not even like any other founder of religion. At the same time, He surpasses any prophet before Him, being on a different level. Because He is unique, His teaching is also unique, but not from the same level of other unique teachings. He is identified with His teaching, and His teaching can only come from Him. He is Prophet in a unique and supreme sense. His identity as a Prophet is connected with His Person, unlike the meaning of prophet in the Old Testament, where this identity is accidentally connected with one person or another. Jesus Christ is the Teacher and the Prophet by Himself, not through a gift received from someone else. He is the Teacher *par excellence* (John 13:13) and the Prophet *par excellence*. He said about Himself, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), and, "I am . . . the truth" (John 14:6).

He is the Teacher in the supreme sense through His own Person, for it is out of His Person that His teaching flows, a teaching that shows the true path for the human person toward the perfect eternity of existence. As such, He is the "Teacher" and the "teaching" in person if He is the "light" in person. He is the one who preaches and the one who preaches about Himself. In Him the subject of the teaching is identified with its "object."

For this very reason He is the eminent Prophet, because His teaching shows the true path for humankind toward perfection. In this He only interprets Himself, being both the path toward perfection and perfection itself. Any progress humankind has made in the direction of its true spiritual perfection, of humanity's true actualization, was made on the path and toward the target indicated by Him. His teaching is truly prophetic because His Person is also prophetic by showing in Himself the human person at his eschatological end. He is the "Prophet" and the ultimate "prophecy" in person. He does not present any other target of humankind's path toward perfection except Himself. He is the ultimate model for humankind, and it is in union with Him that it finds its perfection. Through His divinity as well as through His deified humanity He is the infinite "length and width" in which those who believe in Him will advance unto the ages of ages.[2]

In His teaching He interprets Himself as humankind's ultimate and perfect goal. He does not offer a teaching that is imagined in His mind—one which, from a certain point of view, is better than him who offers it—but one that, from another point of view, presents the whole mystery of the human being and the real, ultimate goal that was reached by humanity in Him and that can be reached by anyone who is united with Him. He does not describe from imagination an elevating picture of what the human being could be, without Himself having success in attaining that goal, but what the human being truly has become in Him. He shows the human being in the state of perfection after the Resurrection, which could become the real state of all who believe in Him. And because through His life and through His Resurrection He is what all humankind is called to become, His teaching is both realistic and prophetic, being substantiated by what He is as the man in whom humanity has been truly realized and will be realized after resurrection. One sees in His teaching as in a mirror His life before and after the Resurrection and implicitly the human person as he is called to be. He is thus Prophet not only through His word but also through His existence before and after the Resurrection. In the risen Christ we continuously have the real image of what we will become. His entire Person is a fulfilled prophecy about the human being as he is called to become in the actualization of his best and most proper potential, but only in union with God.

But He is also the Teacher through His own Person, because we do not meditate upon the teaching He gave us as upon a teaching detached from Him that we struggle to keep ourselves. In this case it would be a different "law." We learn by looking at His Person, and we can follow in His footsteps by staying in touch with Him. "Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt 11:29). In fact, only by receiving power from the Person of Christ do those who believe in Him not endeavor in vain, but they can also become gentle and lowly in heart, and thus they can obtain the rest from the passions that torture and trouble them for nothing.

He is the "Teacher" and the "Prophet" culminating in His own Person because He is not only man, but also God, and as such has in Himself not just the true teaching about God, which radiates from Him, but also about the true man accomplished in Christ as the goal to be reached by others.

In this sense His teaching is the culminating revelation about God and about man, because He as a person is this revelation. In Him all revelation and prophecy is fulfilled. He is the supreme prophecy that has been fulfilled. He is the culminating revelation and the culminating prophecy because He comprises the entire content about God and about man. This revelation is accessible to the human person during the earthly life because this content is communicated directly by Him who is truly God and the man fully accomplished.

The prophets of the Old Testament communicated a partial truth about God and about man, because they received the truth from God as from someone else and they could not have the whole truth in themselves; the man they knew from within themselves was not the man fully accomplished in God. That is why they could not depict the culminating relationship between man and God nor the entire result of God's work upon man. On the other hand, by not being identified with the truth they communicated, they could not communicate this truth with the whole power to transform others and could not be convincing about it through God's culminating work in themselves.

The truth imposes itself convincingly when it communicates itself directly. God imposes Himself as truth with a different power in His act of communication. In every one of His words, one feels the wholeness of the living truth identical with His Person. The integral truth is visible in Christ as a living Person, He Himself becoming the Hypostasis of the human spirit. Due to this fact, the human spirit grasps Him in His fullness. In addition to this, by assuming the human mode of communication, He communicates Himself in the most direct mode, which is the most accessible to human beings. He presents God in the most accessible way because among the degrees of presence, that of the direct dialogue represents the presence of those who are most directly in the maximum closeness between the partners. God is present in Christ in this maximum presence of the partner in direct dialogue as man. This is the most accessible and the fullest approach of God. In Christ, God is available to every human person in the potentiality of this maximum approach as partner in human form in a direct, eternal dialogue, being able to lead the human person into the infinite knowledge of Him as God.

By presenting Himself as God become man and as man who is at the same time in maximum closeness to human beings, Christ announces the coming Kingdom of God in order to begin and to develop to the measure in which human persons believe in Him, enter and advance in communion with Him. The Kingdom of God is, from the moment of Christ's appearance, "in the midst" of men. By preaching Himself, He preaches the Kingdom and His preaching as the revelation of the presence of this Kingdom; it is the preaching through which His Person is revealed. On the other hand, this Kingdom will begin in its fullness at the same time with His Resurrection. Thus, He is also from this point of view the Prophet of the complete revelation, that of God's fulfilled Kingdom and of humanity fully deified from within itself. This Kingdom, just as is Christ's Person, is not a relative newness that could be followed by others, but the ultimate and absolute newness in which are given the plenitude and the infinitude of life.

Christ's preaching is also the call addressed to human persons to receive this Kingdom as the unique chance of their true, eternal, and complete life. "In this unique and for us exemplary relationship between Him and God, the Jesus before Easter lives in His Person the coming of God's Kingdom and thus knows its arrival to be indissolubly connected to His own preaching. By this, one does not deny that through His death and Resurrection both the Kingdom and His preaching acquire the ultimate fundamentality in themselves and for us."[3]

St. Cyril of Alexandria says that Christ, in what He brings in Himself, has revealed in His Hypostasis the types of the law. In His Hypostasis He has transformed the types into truth.[4] The prophets and the righteous in the Old Testament were not themselves the truth in person, namely Christ, but they represented Christ as types, or they portrayed Him in types because they were seeing Him in the distant future, on the basis of communications received from God, or of an unclear vision of the Word in His existence, impossible to be described in all clarity. Therefore, it is only in Christ that the law or the goal it points to is illumined. Christ Himself said that the law points to Him: "For if you believe Moses, you believe Me; for he wrote about Me" (John 5:46). St. Cyril says, "Christ has been considered Apostle and High Priest (Heb 3:1), and He has freed us from the unclear law and transferred us to the clear language of the gospel teaching."[5]

Christ has certainly come or has been sent as His own "Apostle" as He made Himself His own "Prophet" because only inasmuch as He became man remaining also God—namely because He humbled Himself, taking up the human way of communicating Himself—was He able to become accessible as God and could enter into this direct dialogue with human beings. As the Patriarch Jacob unpeels the twigs (Gen 30:37), so does Christ uncover the meanings of the law. He "unpeels the law of its shadow and eliminates the cover from the writings of the prophets, showing the 'reason' from within them brightened and full of spiritual charm."[6]

In doing this, Christ unpeels Himself from the shadow placed on Him in the law, passing from the indirect plane in which He was in the Old Testament to the direct plane of the dialogue.

If Moses could not elevate the entire people to the mountain of the infinite and direct knowledge of God, Christ can do so. St. Cyril of Alexandria says that the entire people could not climb Mount Sinai: "It was impossible for them to approach God through Moses's guidance. They could not approach through types and through the shadow." These were interposed between people and God. But when God entered into a direct dialogue with human persons, eliminating the intermediary types, they suddenly found themselves before God. "The law projected toward the beauty of truth . . . And the truth is Christ, through whom we gained entrance and we arrived close to the Father, raising ourselves, like on a mountain, to the knowledge of truth."[7] "For Christ is the end of the law" (Rom 10:4). The law pointed to Christ's mystery, but Christ was not unveiled in it:

> The mountain is interpreted as being the knowledge of Christ's mystery, beyond understanding and beyond everything. Thus Moses brings the people close to the mountain but does not take them up. As I said earlier, we gain the perfection and the height in wisdom and knowledge through Christ, not through Moses. The latter is a servant and a pedagogue, while the first, as the Lord of all, was revealed as the giver of perfect knowledge.[8]

This knowledge is united with our change toward glory. "There is no one left who does not hear of or does not know the Savior's glory."[9] For in Him God Himself has entered into direct relationship with us, God who is fire and burns away our sins.[10]

For sure, the Word of God, as God, even when He came as Christ into a direct dialogue with us, is not openly seen. Christ's body and His human words still remain "types," "symbols" of His divinity. But now the type is not separated from God; God Himself became "His type," "His symbol."[11] One must advance in the intimacy with Him in order to penetrate through Him as type to His infinite Godhead, not through a path outside of Him. He who is near Him feels the invisible Godhead of His subject through His human words, through His looks, and through all His countenance, behavior, and deeds. "See, the Lord God comes with might, and His arm rules for Him; . . . He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in His arms" (Isa 40:10–11).

One can perceive in each person's words and deeds not only the defined content of certain meanings, but also their indefinable subject, from which they begin. This is the subject's specific "spirit," which envelops and is present in all of its words. It is thus that we experience Christ as divine subject through His Holy Spirit, who is communicated to us through all of His words, acts, and manifestations. This Spirit unites us with the mystical and indefinable subject of Christ through all His words and acts. That is why His words have spirit and life in them. "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). Or "Lord . . . You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). They unite us with Him through His Spirit. "The true mediator is Christ, with whom we are united through relationship if it is true that He descended to us and became man in order to make us partakers of His divine nature, united with God through the partaking and grace of the Holy Spirit."[12] Christ is the "truth" as Person because every spiritual reality that configures the material one through which it is manifested subsists only in person and not outside the person. Thus, the supreme spiritual reality on which every other reality depends does not subsist except in the supreme Person or in the supreme Personal Trinity. Everything that is true has its origin in the creative act of the personal God and is maintained and perfected in life, or in truth, through the participation in the Personal divine life, or in the truth *par excellence*. In Christ the human nature assumed by Him was filled with the divine life, or with truth, through the partaking of it, and every human person who believes will be filled with life and with truth.

Through the fact that He is the supreme Person from whom all might and life irradiates, Christ is a dynamic truth in the sense that as

God He gives power to His humanity to be filled with Him as God, or with His life, and furthermore in the sense that this humanity is stimulated to grow in its truth through the profusions that irradiate from God and that respond to humanity's most natural needs. This is due to the fact that humanity's origin is in Him. This truth as life is communicated through Christ's humanity to other human beings who are also stimulated to grow in Him and to become like Him.

The dynamic quality of truth does not mean that its supreme essence is continuously produced. He is from eternity and to eternity in the same essence. But God promotes the human person as His "image" in eternity, configuring the person out of His infinity more and more after Himself as model. For man, advancing in truth means advancing toward a deeper impression with Christ's humanity as his model, which has the power to lead him into an infinite perfection, for Christ's humanity itself is imprinted and filled with His Godhead. This is achieved through the Spirit. St. Cyril dwelt very much on this process of our endless configuration after Christ's model through the Holy Spirit. The power that accompanies the very word of Christ, in which Christ Himself is present, is the Spirit. The Word of God is the light, but it is the Spirit that irradiates from it (ἐλλάμπει δέ τὸ πνεῦμα).[13]

The saving truth was first achieved in Christ's humanity already through the implication of the hypostatic union, making it fully after its divine model. Christ's teaching is one of the forms through which the Person of Christ is communicated through His human nature to other human persons for the purpose of their salvation.

In this way Christ's words and deeds are necessary for knowing His Person as God and as man fully achieved. For the Person cannot be known otherwise and cannot be actualized in His effects upon others and not even in Himself, in His human aspect, except through words and deeds.

As we have seen before, the Spirit of the Person irradiates or shines through the words of the Person. The Son has the Spirit as a ray of His nature; He extends "the brilliance of the Spirit."[14] The Spirit is the mind of Christ. "For being the mind of Christ, He [the Spirit] conveys to the disciples everything from Christ, not of His own, that is in both His will and operation."[15] Therefore, the Spirit as such a brilliance extended from the Son is at the same time a "hypostasized existential operation [or energy]."[16] As the Son is the Hypostatic Word out of whom spring all the words without depriving the Father and the Spirit of their identity as source of the words, so the Spirit is the hypostasized energy found in the Son, out of whom spring all the energies and operations. Through the energies realized in us by Christ's Spirit, who fulfills His words, we are made more and more after Christ's image. "By receiving in us the image of the Word, namely the Holy Spirit, giver of life, who thus dwells within us, we are reconfigured (ἀναμορφούμενοι) in conformity with the living word of God, being raised again to incorruption and renewing ourselves for the eternal life."[17]

The Holy Spirit is given to us more fully from the risen body of Christ and therefore through the sacraments in which Christ's Person breathes the divine operation through the Spirit more fully than only through words.

The words, however, are necessary for explaining the operation that comes from Christ. Generally, words and the deeds are the means by which we always connect ourselves to someone's person, and therefore to the Person of Christ, too. This is what Christ wants. In the case of other persons, it is more difficult to be connected to them through the spoken words and the deeds done by them in the past, because they are no longer present where their words and deeds are remembered. Furthermore, they are no longer recognized in the state in which they were when they spoke the words or performed their deeds, because they have grown to other meanings. Christ, however, is present where His words and deeds are remembered with faith in Him, for they convey Him as He remained the same in the moment when they are remembered. They represent phases through which He passed as man and through which every human person who wants to reach the level reached by His humanity must pass; He has no reason to retract these phases, which He experiences again with those who are in one of those phases or another, as the only path through which they can also reach the point reached by Him as man.

The words that Christ communicates represent a direct radiation of His Person as their source as well as of His Person's self-explanation. This means that He as a Person is the Word as divine Hypostasis who also became human hypostasis. Even the human person is a hypostatic word as total attention and tendency of self-communication, as total calling and response to an uninterrupted relationship in love. As such, the person is a hypostatic word in an infinite state of communication. But if the human person is a hypostatic word, the divine Person by becoming incarnate is the Hypostatic divine and human Word in the supreme degree. This divine Person communicates unceasingly His supreme love and requires the unceasing response of a corresponding love on behalf of the human person. Out of Christ irradiates the most redeeming word. He is experienced with the most acute responsibility, with the deepest obligation to respond positively with words and deeds. Christ awakens in us this responsibility not only through His words, but also through His Person, both as God and as man: as God by commanding us what we have to do in order to accomplish ourselves as human beings after His image, and as man by showing us the realized model for the human person. *All His words have full backing in His Person.*

The human person is the hypostatic (subsistent) word and thus reason-endowed, for it exists through dependence on the supreme Hypostatic Word, having to respond and to conform to Him. Every word originates in this person as a word of response, out of the need to respond, expressing that person as being a responding hypostatic word, thus being linked to the supreme Hypostatic Word, who speaks by asking for a response. The human person exists in this condition as a responding word because God speaks to him and asks him to respond and therefore to be in conformity with Him. In this sense God, the supreme Hypostatic Word, is the Creator and Sustainer of the human person, who is a responding word. In this is concentrated the human person's condition as "image" of the divine word. The human being is called by the divine Word into existence and is sustained in existence because he is called in every moment to advance in an existence similar to His through responding to God's commandment to be in conformity with Him. Inasmuch as the human being responds less positively, his existence is weakened, and in hell he becomes a mere shadow of existence.

The divine Word speaks to us through all works and circumstances, calling for our response. Concomitantly, He speaks to us in an intimate and mystical way through our conscience. But in Jesus Christ, the Word speaks to us, being incarnate as man, through His direct words as God in human form, emphasizing the responsiveness in us through the human model He places before us. His words concomitantly reach our conscience in a much more intense form and enlighten for this conscience the words addressed to us through things and through constantly new situations. Through the same utterance addressed to our conscience, He actualizes for it and for us personally the words He had spoken yesteryear. The Word comes to us continuously through all the works and through conscience, but He comes in the clearest way through the words of the Scripture, which He addresses to us continuously in His position as the divine Word incarnate. He has assumed human words in order to address us in the most comprehensible way and to continuously actualize in us the obligation to respond. He thus makes His call as a realized man—or as a person like we should be—to resound continuously in our conscience. Because He was such a man in relationship with His neighbors, He asks us to fulfill ourselves as human beings in relation to our neighbors of every moment. He thus gives a special intensity to the appeals our neighbors make to our responsibility toward them. In this way, Christ speaks to us through all the words of our neighbors who call us to help them and who call us to a life of responsible seriousness. Through all this Christ binds us directly to Him and communicates to us His power and love, calling in return for our love. Through all things He thus helps us to grow spiritually after His image.

St. Maximus the Confessor considers the entire universe of consistent realities as an incarnate speech of the divine Logos, therefore of Christ. The Holy Scripture considers this speech as a spoken universe that expresses and interprets in proper words the incorporated universe of the Logos's reasons and its purpose, which is fulfilled in relationship with God. Both of these express the thinking and will of God, who brought all into existence and leads creation toward the strong union with Him and thus to deification. But God spoke and speaks in the most direct way and therefore more powerfully—in the degree of the most intense presence, which is that of face-to-face dialogue—in Christ as the Word incarnate.[18]

We specified that because Christ speaks to us not only as God, but also as fulfilled man, He communicates to us not only the word of God toward us, but also His response as human model toward God. In a special way it is Christ who communicates this response of Himself as man toward God, because He prays for us and He teaches us how to pray. Through this He also strengthens our word of response toward God. Properly speaking, the purpose of all the teaching He gives us is to make us respond to God's call. Thus, even through His teaching He is not only useful to us, but He also glorifies God. He is useful to us because He makes us glorify God. The direction toward God is implied in His teaching addressed to us. He glorified God because He gave the people the words which the Father gave Him (John 17:8, 14), and because He made known to humans the name of the Father and saw to it that they, too, may keep His words (John 17:6).

The incarnate Word of God is communicated to us not only through proper words, but also through works of love, of sacrifice, and of power—which are also words.

When we, or anyone else, see Christ through faith, we see His Person everywhere as being a Hypostatic Word, the originator of words and deeds, both of which are accompanied by a supreme power and light. This is how He exerts His full efficacy. Today this full efficacy of Christ upon us is exerted through the sacraments, in which His words spoken in the past bring to the fore Christ Himself as a Person in His present work. This is so because, by invoking Him through faith and through prayer, He comes and manifests His mighty works, or the power manifested in His works from the past, for the benefit of those who invoke Him with faith and who partake of the grace of the Holy Spirit through the means of certain gestures and matters that are sanctified through prayer.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ONE WORK OF SALVATION: JESUS AS HIGH PRIEST AND SUPREME SACRIFICE

If in His ministry as Teacher-Prophet, Jesus Christ is directed particularly toward us—although in it there is implied the will to connect us to the Father, because by following this teaching we fulfill the Father's will, and thus this ministry comprises also a direction toward God—the ministry as High Priest through which He offers Himself as Sacrifice is directed particularly toward the Father. However, it also implies a direction toward human beings because in this ministry He wants to include human beings, too, and thus it also comprises a direction toward them. Because Christ offers the human nature assumed by Him as sacrifice, this ministry has a direction and an effect directed toward this purpose. These three directions are so much implicated in one another that it is impossible to separate them; in fact, one cannot be thought of separately from the others. In the Holy Scripture and in the thinking of the Holy Fathers, all of these three directions are affirmed in Christ's ministry as High Priest. "For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Heb 5:1).

The elimination of any of these directions in Christ's ministry as High Priest weakens the meaning and efficacy of His saving work. Western theology—both Catholic and Protestant—by eliminating the effect of Christ's ministry as High Priest upon His human nature and by considering it only as a work of satisfying God's honor on behalf of the human beings who offended Him with their sin, or only as expiation of their guilt, has eliminated the entire concern for reestablishing the human nature through sacrifice, first in Christ and then through Him in all who believe in Him; this concern is the entire ascetic, sanctifying, and deifying effort of the sacrifice and of salvation in general, thus reducing the latter to a simple juridical operation that is exterior to human nature.

The Holy Fathers emphasized so much the effect of the sacrifice directed toward the restoration, sanctification, and deification of the human nature in Christ, and through it in all who believe in Him, that some Orthodox theologians were tempted to regard sacrifice less than a ministry directed toward God for His glorification and emphasized more the one directed toward the restoration of human nature in Christ and thus in all human beings. This was done in opposition to Catholic theology, in which it was affirmed that sin did not weaken or distort human nature, but only offended God; therefore, the sacrifice had nothing to redeem in our nature, but had only to eliminate the offense against God so that our nature could be again admitted into the relationship with Him and adorned with the supernatural gifts. This emphasis also opposed Protestant theology, which acknowledges that through sin not only God was offended, but our nature was so totally altered that it cannot be healed; through the expiation of the guilt before God, one can obtain the promise of the restoration of our nature in the life to come. In opposition to these theories, some Orthodox theologians affirmed that one cannot admit that God is upset with man because of sin, and therefore He demands a sacrifice for forgiveness; thus the sacrifice would have no other meaning than to restore the human nature in Christ and to gain man's love for Him and for God. This very thing would constitute a restoration of their nature because of its sickness as a consequence of separation from God and of enmity against Him.

In the tendency to understand the sinful state of man almost only as an enmity against God, not also as God's anger with man, some theologians infer, on the basis of 2 Corinthians 5:18 and Romans 5:1, that St. Paul "nowhere says that God reconciles Himself to man, but always that God reconciles man to Him." But against this conclusion, the text in Romans 10:3 has been invoked, where it is said that man struggles to strengthen "his righteousness," and this is something about which God is disgusted. "For all of man's righteousness is filthier than any hatred, according to the Scripture (Isa 64:6), which calls it wickedness."[1] Nicholas Cabasilas also says, "Christ Himself became for us 'righteousness from God and consecration and redemption' (1 Cor 1:30). He destroys the enmity in His flesh and reconciles us to God (cf. Eph 2:15–16)."[2] However, a Greek theologian rightfully says, "But God does not hate His own child, even when he is in a state of sin, but He is only disgusted at man's state of sin, in which he clothes himself and is disfigured because of it."[3] The human person cannot come out of this state of enmity, unpleasant to God, except through sacrifice, a sacrifice that he cannot offer, but only Christ can.

Thus, the most complete understanding of Christ's sacrifice is that which sees its direction both toward God and toward the human nature assumed by Christ and, through it, toward human beings. This inclusive understanding is proper to the Holy Fathers and in accord with the Holy Scripture.

But the fact that through the sacrifice offered to the Father, Christ restores and deifies the human nature, gives its direction toward God a different sense than that of a simple satisfaction of His offended honor. God could not love man's state of sin, which is his state of enmity toward God. Christ as man gains God's love for the human nature by rectifying through sacrifice its state of enmity toward God. Or vice versa: by manifesting through sacrifice the will to be totally dedicated to God, the human nature is thus restored from its state of sickness. These are the two undivided aspects of the sacrifice. A parent rejoices in the child who goes back to respecting him not because he sees in this his honor reestablished, but because through this respect that the child gives him again he sees the moral and even ontological resources as being restored in the child's being.

In a word, the sacrifice provides for the restoration of communion between God and man. Restored communion means both human nature restored from its egoism and God's love manifested unimpeded in its will to adorn the human person with its gifts, namely unimpeded by the human person's hostile egoism. The human person's sacrifice is necessary for the restoration of communion, both for God and for the human person himself.

The Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers see all three directions as present in Christ's priestly ministry in the reciprocal interconditioning given them by the meaning mentioned above.

As regards the direction toward God, we have seen what is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews (5:1, 7). Christ's sacrifice fulfills the sacrifices in the Old Testament, which were all directed toward God, certainly for the benefit of the people: "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most High Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb 9:12).

Through this sacrifice offered to God, Christ perfects Himself at the same time as man, and by this He sanctifies others, or makes them perfect. This is what occurred in the sacrifices of the Old Testament. "And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Heb 5:9). "For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb 9:13–14). "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all . . . For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Heb 10:10, 14).

We have shown so far only the reality and the necessity of two directions included in the sacrifice of Christ: the one directed toward God, as opposed to the alienation of man from Him, and the one for the benefit of human beings in order to attract them to this movement toward God. We have also mentioned that both of them aim at restoring communion between God and human beings. But we did not say anything about the substance of the interior content of the sacrifice as directed toward God as well as its significance for the humanity assumed by Christ and its purpose through the particularly intimate relation with human beings.

The substance of Christ's death as sacrifice directed toward God with a great effect upon His humanity is a total surrender of Christ, as man, to the Father. The cause of the suffering implied in it, on account of His relation with the human persons alienated from God, is His deep and total compassion for humans. This compassion, carried all the way to death for them, as a total surrender to the Father in order to make them also surrender to the Father, is in itself an effective force upon them as well as upon His humanity. This compassion is a great suffering for their sins; however, it cannot by itself save them from sin. It must infuse in them the tendency to destroy their egoism by taking strength from His death before the Father. Christ has manifested His compassion even on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). Their insensibility and wretchedness cause Him pain, but this gives Him the strength to die in order to take them out of this state. In Gethsemane He is afraid of death, but His compassion for humans gives Him strength to conquer fear, even though, on the other hand, it also causes Him suffering. The psychology of Christ has been too simplified, too dehumanized in scholastic theology, being reduced to a singular act of juridical satisfaction. Christ, however, remains in a permanent state of sacrifice in the double sense of His surrender, as man, to the Father and of His compassion for humans.

But if we are saved because we assume the state of sacrifice and the new life attained through it by Christ's body, this sacrificed and risen body gains a central, permanent importance in our salvation, understood as cleansing of sins and as leaving the state of sin or of enmity toward God, as well as participation in the divine life. His body has this permanent, central importance because it is the body of God the Word. Only in this way is it filled with the entire divine life; only in this way is His body the incandescent ring through which the divine fire is transmitted to us, the divine fire which eliminated in Him death, and through Him that fire is extended to us in order to illumine, purify, and deify us and to melt away the power of death in us. In this one can see that the body of Christ has this permanent, central importance because it was not sacrificed by someone else, namely without His will, but by His own subject, that is out of His own initiative as the one who had in Himself the divinity borne by the Hypostasis of the Word. Thus, Christ is not only the Teacher and the teaching hypostasized through Him, but He is also the High Priest and the self-sacrifice. The first would not have existed without the latter, and vice versa. The High Priest is one and the same with the Sacrifice. Or the Sacrifice is one and the same with the High Priest. That is why He is the ultimate Sacrifice and the ultimate High Priest. For the same reason He is also the Teacher and the ultimate teaching.

Thus the permanent, central importance of Christ's body depends on His identification as High Priest with His identity as Sacrifice. His position of self-sacrifice is linked to His high priesthood. As the incarnate Word is the Word in a Person or the Word uttering speech, so is He also the Sacrifice in the Person, the self-offering sacrifice, "the living Sacrifice," as one of the church hymns says. The simultaneous identities as High Priest and Sacrifice are not inadvertently associated with His Person, but they are the expression of His own Person as the Son of God incarnate for us. If man is created in general to be a living sacrifice offered by himself to God, the incarnate Hypostasis of the Word realizes *par excellence* this identity, being the supreme Sacrifice and the supreme High Priest *par excellence*. By accepting to become man, the Son of God accepted to become our supreme High Priest and the supreme Sacrifice for us, namely He accepted to offer His body entirely to God and by this to raise it again in order to offer it to us as the seed of the Resurrection through our union with Him. He is not High Priest in His identity as God, because the High Priest serves God. But He is not the High Priest except for the fact that He is also God, because He can thus be the fully efficient Mediator between human beings and God, and further because He makes God the originator of the Resurrection through His death, accepted as sacrifice. The ability of His complete offering as man to God is implied in His condition as the Son of God who is from eternity in a filial obedience to the Father.

St. Cyril of Alexandria says,

> We should know that one could not say about the Son Himself, the Word of God, that He serves as priest (ἱερατεύειν) and that He would be in a liturgical state if one were not to understand that He became like us and as He was called Prophet and Apostle on account of His humanity, so was He called Priest. This is the emptying (*kenosis*). For He was in the image of and equal with the Father, before whom stand the Seraphim above and to whom thousands and thousands of angels offer a holy service. When He emptied Himself it is said that He showed Himself as offerer of holy things and of the tabernacle of truth. It was then that He who is above the whole creation was sanctified with us. "For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: *I will declare Your name to My brethren*" (Heb 2:11–12). Thus He who sanctifies as God, when He became man and dwelled among us and was a brother to us according to humanity, is said to have been also sanctified. The need to be priest and to be sanctified pertains to the descent into the body.[4]

One has to comment on the strong correlation between the sanctifying operation of God and the priestly operation through which one obtains the sanctifying operation of God. It is the correlation between the creature's self-offering and the sanctification obtained from God. At bottom, the human person's identity as priest is but the ultimate conclusion of his identity as responsible being. As by his identity as responsible being, the human person responds to God, who offers His love to him, so by his identity as priest he offers himself to God responding to the same call of Him, who wants, through His offering, to fill him with His gifts. If love sanctifies him who offers himself, this very self-offering of the human person fulfills a condition for his sanctification, or it is its premise.

Two things are implied in this: to reject priesthood means to reject humility and service before God; and the sanctification of which Christ partakes refers to His human nature. This is the purification from sin and the filling with the divine life of which Christ's body partakes in Himself as God, so that through its mediation all those who believe may be sanctified. This sanctification of the body means either the preparation of the Offerer in order to sacrifice Himself to God, or is an effect of the act of sacrifice. This implies the direction of the sacrifice toward God and also toward Him who sacrifices Himself.

Christ's high priesthood and His sacrifice are means for reestablishing the communion between God and human persons. All three directions of Christ's sacrifice and through this its efficiency as sanctification and liberation of our nature from sin and death, are exposed by St. Cyril of Alexandria: "Therefore, when Christ became High Priest and through Him we were brought to God and the Father spiritually in a sweet fragrance, we were richly deemed worthy of His benevolence and have gained the sure promise that death no longer has dominion over us. Then the things of wrath were disintegrated, and the consequences of the old curse were eradicated. For we have been blessed in Christ."[5]

In his work *Veneration in Spirit and in Truth*, St. Cyril develops the idea that we cannot enter to the Father except as a pure sacrifice. We cannot transpose ourselves into this state of pure sacrifice. That is why Christ has accepted the state of pure sacrifice, so that by entering to the Father in this state He may also introduce us gathered in Him, or Himself making His abode in us.

Here the idea of sacrifice clearly shows that of communion. Christ's entrance as man to the Father, conditioned by the state of pure sacrifice that can be understood also as an opening of the human person for his entrance to the Father, is the restoration of communion between Christ as man and God. But He realized His state of sacrifice for us as a conclusion and strengthening of His communion with us, or as a foundation of our communion with Him. For He enters to the Father as a pure sacrifice, or He restores His communion with the Father in order to introduce us, too, into the communion with the Father. By this we also enter into communion with Christ as God, because we enter into communion with His Father, who thus becomes our Father. The sacrifice is necessary for communion. The sacrifice is animated by the tendency toward communion; it is self-denial for the sake of the other; it is self-forgetfulness out of love for the other. Thus communion is the result of sacrifice. Somehow the very *kenosis* of the Son of God, by assuming our nature and by accepting death, is His initiative toward restoring His communion, as God, with us and also toward restoring His communion, as man, with the Father and thereby our communion in Him with the Father.

The inference of what has been said so far is that the Father, too, needed our sacrifice for the restoration of our communion with Him; this sacrifice was not to satisfy His honor, but to open us to the communion with Him by denying ourselves and seeing Him in all His glory. That is why He offered His Son as sacrifice, because we were not able to bring this sacrifice. He sent Him in the flesh in order to offer this sacrifice necessary for communion not to exclusively resolve a conflict between God and us, but to make the sacrifice of His Son the power and the stimulus for our sacrifice. For this reason Christ becomes High Priest and Sacrifice for us. He is thus the achiever of our communion with God and among us.

The saving efficacy of Christ as High Priest is seen by Leontius of Byzantium, too, in the fact that He is not only man, but also God. As man He offers His body as sacrifice, but as God He places it at the right hand of the Father. In this the sacrificed body is glorified and able to radiate from Him the deifying power over all. Here we encounter a new paradox. Christ's body is an eternal sacrifice, infusing in us, too, the spirit of sacrifice, but at the same time is the place wherein dwells all the glory and divine power destined for us. It is the body in the permanent actuality of the sacrificial sate, but also of deifying action, beyond the apparent contradiction between these two states. Only in this way does it give us the power for sacrifice and, even through this, a real power.

In addressing the Nestorians, who divided Christ into two persons, Leontius says,

> You who do not acknowledge the Apostle and the High Priest of our faith, as Paul commands you (Heb 3:1), tell me what priest you ever know of the same essence with Him who is venerated as priest? Or what apostle do you know who is not subject to Him who sent him as apostle? . . . We say that the same Christ whom we know as the Creator of all is also a creature . . . For we know that the same Christ is God, Priest, and Sacrifice. Therefore, for the reason that He is called Priest, do not consider Him only worshiper and minister of God, according to the meaning in which every priest is known. Listen to the same apostle saying again of the same Priest: "who, being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, . . . sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1:3). Look at what you do not acknowledge together with us: it is not proper for the priest to sit on the throne together with He who is worshiped and together honored and glorified. Therefore, He who became the Priest of God on earth and made His body a sanctified (ἱερουργήσας) sacrifice and introduced God is not seated only as Priest together with God in heaven, but as the One who is also true God.[6]

First of all, we notice that in the fact that Christ is sanctified as priest by God through the Holy Spirit is shown not only the Son's initiative to offer Himself as sacrifice for the people (thus, in the three directions), but also God's initiative. The Son's initiative is rather His simultaneous response to the Father's initiative, which constitutes the co-fulfillment, "the eternal counsel" of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. On the basis of this initiative, the Father sends the Son into the world to sacrifice Himself as man. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). This gives a foundation for God's initiative in the human priesthood. This is the meaning of the priest's consecration.

This initiative of God encounters man's aspiration for sacrifice and self-sacrifice, or to dedicate himself to God. Consecration is not God's work directed toward a passive object, but is a response to an aspiration of the human subject. We spoke in this sense of a correlation between priesthood and the sanctifying operation of God. Certainly, this aspiration on the side of man cannot be actualized without the divine initiative. For us humans, due to sin, the divine initiative cannot fully actualize the human aspiration and cannot make it completely available for God. God does not make someone a priest as an object or against his will.

In the case of Christ, the initiative of God the Father encounters the simultaneous and total response of the Son before Incarnation, and after Incarnation it encounters His response as man, thus perfecting in a complete availability the human aspiration for priesthood. In the case of Christ, the association of His human nature is added to the Father's and the Son's initiative, an association that makes the response of the Son to be also the human response that comes to meet the Father's initiative.

In the Old Testament, in which the full communion between God and the people could not yet be achieved, there is less of an emphasis on the voluntary response of the human person. Then the sacrifice was offered because of the commandment, and it is significant that mention is made there of sanctifying the animals before they were sacrificed. Just as significant is the fact that there is no mention of a response of those who were going to become priests, but only of the initiative of God, who appoints all of Aaron's descendants as priests.

In the case of Christ, the initiative of the Son of God to sacrifice Himself as man—an initiative that is combined as a response with the sanctifying initiative of the Father—makes Christ as the incarnate Son of God hypostasize, or personalize, the humanity assumed at His birth as man, having imprinted in Him the propensity toward sacrifice so that Christ as man could also be sanctified as sacrifice from the very moment of His birth. Thus, from the very beginning of His existence as man, the sanctifying initiative of the Father encountered Christ's propensity as man to offer Himself as sacrifice.

In this sense, the consecration in preparation for sacrifice and the consecration of the sacrifice, or of the one who was sacrificed, appear as God's initiative for and as man's response to his reception and entrance into communion with God. Christ is sanctified and sanctifies Himself from the moment He becomes man in order to offer Himself as sacrifice. It is from that moment that He realizes as man the beginning of communion with God. But He is sanctified also as an offered sacrifice, because through it He entered as man into the full communion with the Father. "For He was in the image of and equal with the Father, . . . when He emptied Himself it is said that He had shown Himself as offerer of holy things and of the tabernacle of truth. It was then that He who is above the whole creation was sanctified with us."[7] The simultaneity of His will to sacrifice Himself, together with the initiative of the Father, is shown before Incarnation and from the beginning of the Incarnation. We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the Son is presented as Priest in accordance with Psalm 40:6–8: "Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: '*Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said: Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God*'" (Heb 10:5–7). The sanctification of Him who wants to sacrifice Himself and of His sacrifice once offered do not have a meaning worthy of God except when understood as manifestation of the will for communion on behalf of the Father and as acceptance on behalf of Christ as man, or as beginning of the realization of communion and as its realization indeed. Otherwise it remains an attachment of a "physical" identity to Him who is sanctified and to His sacrifice.

Understood in this, the only possible manner, Christ's death no longer appears as the offering of a substantive satisfaction to the offended honor of God on behalf of men, or as the expiation of a substantive punishment in their stead, for the same reason.

Western theology, both Catholic and Protestant, has not known another modality of man's liberation from sin except that of suffering death for him or the amnesty on the basis of a satisfaction offered to God. The Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers see the solution beyond this external alternative, namely in God's movement toward communion, which is also imprinted within the human being. In both other cases God remains external, punishing, or He places the human being from without into a movement of satisfaction. In the spirit of this theology even someone like Hans Urs von Balthasar, who otherwise agrees with much of the spirit of the Eastern Fathers, says in quoting approvingly another Catholic theologian,

> God cannot love but only hate the moral evil, . . . There is no authentic love without hatred, for hatred is the reverse of love. God could not truly love the good if He did not hate and did not reject evil . . . That is why God does not forgive sin without expiation. A simple amnesty would be equivalent to ignoring evil; ignoring it takes sin too lightly and even recognizes its existence by right.[8]

Even though it appears that God's wrath is considered here as directed toward sin and upon man in general, in reality, because that man's liberation from sin is viewed as necessarily imposing His punishment, the wrath is also directed toward the sinful person. The distinction between sinner and sin is made only when forgiveness does not come following expiation or satisfaction, but when God takes the initiative of the communion with man in order to provoke in him the response through communion. When the response is produced, forgiveness takes place. For the response has also the sense of repentance.

The human person assumes the tendency toward the communion initiated by God by renouncing the state of sin as a state of egoism. This renunciation is a difficult, and therefore painful, effort for him. But painful is also his persistence in sin, given all the consequences that sin implies. But once the human person transforms the painful consequences of sin into means for its overcoming, they cease to be regarded as a punishment to be endured. In fact, the consequences of sin as punishment are the egoistic tendencies, pains, and death. The acceptance of egoistic tendencies produces the pains with their end, which is death. But their satisfaction means to continue sinning. In this case pain and death as their result mean both the consequence of sin and its punishment. Pain as a tense effort to renounce egoistic tendencies, although it maintains its character as the consequence of sin, no longer has the character of the punishment for it, but of a means for liberation from sin and, as such, for realizing the communion that will also lead to the resurrection into eternal life.

Thus, God accepts the human being not because he suffers a punishment for his sin, but because he makes the effort to sin no more and because he assumed the pains suffered as punishment for sin and made them simple consequences of sin and means for struggle against it, as well as for entering into the communion offered by God. This is certainly a glorification of God that is more real than the one offered through suffering pain and death as punishment for sin or as satisfaction offered to God for His offended honor.

This can only be achieved first by Christ, and only in Him can we, too, achieve it. The sense given to pain and death as punishment for sin has been completely changed for the first time in Christ, although on the other hand He assumed them as consequences of sin, or as a "curse" that came upon all humankind as the consequence of sin. These consequences had in and of themselves not only the quality of a curse, but also the means to limit and to overcome sin, through the fact that man was disgusted by sin because of them, as well as through their use in limiting sin and also as a means to eliminate sin. Only in Christ were they completely purified of their quality as punishment for sin, for only in Him did they cease to be combined with sin. Therefore, only in Him was death conquered, because only in Him did death become a sacrifice, or a means for the sanctification of the human nature, and only in Him did pains, too, become a means for the sanctification of the human nature and for its "remedy." This is even more evident in what follows.

Christ's death is the sanctified and sanctifying sacrifice and the means to conquer death. Christ conquers death in Himself because in Him man's communion with God is achieved in an ultimate way through death, as is his sanctification. We see this starting with St. Gregory of Nyssa's concept of death and resurrection. According to him, death as separation of the soul from the body comes as a consequence of the separation of the human being from God, who is the cohesive force between soul and body as well as the cohesive force between all things, for that matter. Through man's return to God, God restores the connection between soul and body after their separation, or after the connection between them was weakened. But this could fully take place for the first time in Christ, whose unique Hypostasis contains eternally in Himself soul and body, as well as divinity and humanity. If Christ has accepted death in Himself, He did this only out of *oikonomia*—in order to offer His divine power the occasion to manifest itself in such a way as to reunite soul and body, even as they were separated by death. This was the situation reached by our human nature as the consequence of sin. He wanted to conquer death by suffering it, not by avoiding it, so that He can offer Himself totally to God, and through Him everyone else can do the same. Thus, communion with God may also be the result of the human person's effort for a total self-renunciation, an effort to arrive at the encounter with God's will for communion.

For this purpose, by uniting in His Hypostasis the human nature with the divine nature, He has set from the beginning the foundation for the Resurrection. He united Himself as a unifying principle with both the body and the soul. Through this He was united with the movement of the soul that wants to remain united with the body and to work toward its most complete unification, strengthening this movement of the soul through His divine operation; but He was also united with the movement of the body that, as a consequence of sin, tends to be separated from the soul and to decompose. In order to completely conquer this tendency of the body, Christ lets it follow its course until the end, namely until death, but not until disintegration or decay:

> Our position is, that God was born subject to both movements of our nature; first, that by which the soul hastens to join the body, and then again that by which the body is separated from the soul; and that when the concrete humanity was formed by the mixture of these two, I mean the sensible and the intelligent elements, through that ineffable and inexpressible conjunction, this result in the Incarnation followed, that after the soul and body had been once united the union continued forever. For when our nature, following its own proper course, had even in Him been advanced to the separation of soul and body, He knitted together again the disunited elements, cementing them, as it were, together with the cement of His Divine power, and recombining what has been severed in a union never to be broken. And this is the Resurrection.[9]

This full union of Christ's humanity with the Godhead and within itself of the body and the soul is produced on one hand by its being assumed in the Hypostasis of God's Word and, on the other hand, by His total self-renunciation as man, which ultimately ended in death. Christ accepted death as man on account of His total trust that God would raise Him up through His full union with Him, which was achieved through His total self-renunciation, through His renunciation of self-support. But He can do this because His human nature is in His divine Hypostasis, which is inseparable from the Hypostasis of the Father. In this He will manifest God's glory in Himself. This union is concomitantly His maximum communion as man with God the Father on the basis of the fact that He is as a Person the divine Hypostasis of the Word; as such, He had the power to remain in total union with the Father and the Holy Spirit and to sanctify His humanity through the renunciation of any self-support as well as through its maximum communion with God in Him as divine Hypostasis.

In this context His purification in advance of any egoism and the bearing of the pains and struggles connected with this renunciation have also the sense of a sanctification in advance, of a spiritual "mortification" for God or for the communion with Him, the sense of a preparation for their culmination in the death on the cross.

His death accepted in this way, followed by the Resurrection, is at the same time the definitive setting for this state of self-renunciation, of sanctification, and of communion with the Father. This is how Christ's states of Sacrifice, of permanent High Priest, and of Resurrection—as well as His state of eternal victory over death and of Sitting at the Right Hand of the Father after He has entered with His blood into the heavenly Holy of Holies—are reconciled in the faith of the Church. Only in His identity as pure Sacrifice before the Father, or in the eternal life, can He imprint upon us the state of pure sacrifice from the power of the sacrifice itself and introduce us to His Father. "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood, He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb 9:12). If He entered to the eternal God, namely within the plane of eternal existence, with His blood, it means that there He found eternity with His all-pure blood due to the sacrifice through which He was purified. He is in a state of sacrifice. But at the same time He is in the state in which He has passed beyond all death and in which our death is melted away, the death of us who "die according to the likeness of His death."

Thus there is continuity between death and the Resurrection. By entering with His sacrifice in the Holy of Holies on high, He remains there for eternity and makes us partakers of His glory (Heb 1:3; 10:12). Death passes into resurrection and remains, on the one hand, in it; on the other hand, it is overcome in eternity for Christ as man and for us, since by being united with Him we die spiritually as the old men of sin together with Him. When in dying to yourself you are united through love with the One who died to Himself for the Father and for all, thus remaining eternally alive before the Father, you, too, remain eternally in Him. "In Him there is all the perfection through sanctification in the Spirit. Through Him we have been called to the Father, and we will ascend together with Him to the city above."[10] We will enter into communion with the Father where He entered for us through sacrifice. This fact occurs all the time until the end of the world. "Christ is the truth through whom we had the entrance and have arrived next to the Father, ascending as if on a mountain to the knowledge of Him."[11]

The idea that through death Christ establishes man's communion with God and thereby conquers death for eternity was expressed by

St. Cyril of Alexandria in various forms. Here is one: "In binding the horde of the unclean demons and by shedding His own blood for us, thus putting an end to death and corruption, our Lord Jesus Christ makes us His own as the ones who no longer live our life, but His. Had He not died for us, we would not have been saved; and had He not been among the dead, He would not have shattered the cruel sovereignty of death."[12] His very death was an act of victory over death and therefore of overcoming the lack of communion between man and the Father and with His fellow human beings. For His death was for the Father and for us. Through this He implicated us in it. Perhaps a prefiguration of this mode of salvation in Christ is man's conviction that in dying for someone else he is united with that person forever.

We do not have to die as Christ did in a real way, because this would mean that our death was not destroyed in His death. However, we die at the end of our life, but not of a death as punishment, because this purpose of death was eliminated in Christ for those who are united with Him. We die by uniting ourselves with Christ "in the likeness of His death" (Rom 6:5). We die to the old man, namely to sin, not by suffering like Christ the pains that lead to death, unmingled with sin—therefore not as punishment for sin—but as means for overcoming death and as pains of our effort to renounce our pleasurable and sinful egoism. "For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His Resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin" (Rom 6:5–6). We have to sanctify ourselves from the power of the sanctified body of Christ, who sits at the right of glory and of whom we partake by fighting against our sinful passions and bearing without sin the innocent passions, or the sufferings, as consequences of sin. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom 12:1). This is our priesthood and our sacrifice from the power and after the likeness of Christ's priesthood and sacrifice.

It is not the world that man will offer firstly to God as sacrifice in his identity as priest, but himself. In this sense St. Peter links "the royal priesthood" of those who believe in Christ to their duty to proclaim in their being "the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" and to "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet 2:9, 11). Only in becoming holy sacrifices do we enter to the Father, namely into the communion with Him. But only in Christ can we enter into this communion with the Father. In this is shown the extension in us of Christ's sanctified sacrifice, realized in order to make us, too, but not without our cooperation, sanctified sacrifices. Because Christ as Sacrifice is always a Priest, He can make us, too, priests in a strong union with Him.

St. Gregory of Nyssa says that the definitive union between soul and body, or the Resurrection achieved by Christ for His human nature, was extended to all. To be sure, the cause of this extension lies in the fact that Christ as divine Hypostasis of His human nature is in a direct relation with us, that by offering His human nature to be partaken of, He Himself enters into the most intimate relationship with us as our fundamental hypostasis. Thus in the reunion of His human nature's soul with the body through Resurrection is also virtually contained the future reunion between the soul and the body of every human person who died believing in Him or being in a direct relationship with Him:

> For when, in that concrete humanity which He had taken to Himself, the soul after the dissolution returned to the body, then this uniting of the several portions passes, as by a new principle, in equal force upon the whole human race. This, then, is the mystery of God's plan with regard to His death and His Resurrection from the dead; namely, instead of preventing the dissolution of His body by death and the necessary results of nature, to bring both back to each other in the resurrection; so that He might become in Himself the meeting-ground both of life and death, having re-established in Himself that nature which death had divided, and being Himself the originating principle of the uniting of those separated portions.[13]

He allows in the human nature contained in Himself the separation of the soul from the body, or death, but He brings back in it, through His power, the eternal life itself so that all who die united with Him, or who are somehow within Him, may similarly rise again with Him. The victory over death as restitution and finalization of man's unity and life is the victory of the Person. Following sin, the person is destined not only to suffer death, but to also have the possibility to use death, through the power of God, toward strengthening the relationship with other persons.

Christ's divine and human Person uses death to perfect the relationship with God and with human beings. Thus, by restoring the perfect communion, Christ's Person conquers in Himself the death He suffered for other persons. Death without hope in the Resurrection comes from the sin of isolation, and death without resurrection is the same as a definitive immersion in solitude.

When Hans Urs von Balthasar considers Christ's death as immersion into the abyss of abandonment by all, including the Father, he starts from the Catholic and Protestant concept of His death as punishment that He must suffer or fulfill until the end, just like any other sinner. This is how he interprets one hymn of the Byzantine hymnographer Roman the Psalter, thinking that he could find backing for this concept in Eastern thought. In this hymn the Son tells His Mother as she stands by the cross, "I descended all the way to where nonbeing casts its shadows, I looked into the abyss, and I cried: 'Father, where are You?' But I heard nothing except the eternal uproar that no one controls . . . and when I raised my eyes from the boundless abyss toward the divine eye, an empty and bottomless orbit was staring at Me." And Hans Urs von Balthasar continues, "This vision was often considered as the starting point for the modern theology of 'the death of God'; the most important aspect of this is that the void and the abandonment expressed in it are nothing but the normal death of a man produced in the world."[14]

A few distinctions must be made: an average person, especially an unbeliever, does not see God in death and still does not suffer so much from the solitude in which he finds himself, because he has become accustomed not to expect anything more, and thus his conscience has become worn out. Even if it is not worn out but he has become accustomed to unbelief, he is desperate. Jesus suffers from this solitude because His conscience is not worn out, and He knows of God and is not shaken at all in this certainty. In His lonely conscience He cries out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" but He does not fall into desperation. Proof of this is His final cry: "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."

Christ hopes, however, that He will be saved; He even knows this. For His gaze as God pierces like lightning through darkness, and this brings under control the suffering of having been abandoned.

In this sense St. Cyril of Alexandria considers the Lord's death as a sort of short sleep, which is what makes the death of those who are united with Him a similar sort of sleep. Speaking of the mandrakes from

Genesis 30, St. Cyril says that they "indicate as if through divination the mystery of Christ, who falls asleep in a certain way for us . . . Where death is accepted as sleep, there one should await the coming back to life . . . Because Christ, as the first among men, showed us death as sleep, He became for the human nature the door and the path for using death itself in order to conquer it. That is why St. Paul the divine always calls the dead as being asleep (1 Cor 11:30; 1 Thess 4:13)."[15] Considering that our salvation is achieved through the suffering of this "punishment" until the end, as juridical satisfaction to God's honor, Catholic theology formulated the theory that the Church has been fully established at the foot of the cross.

The Church is not established juridically, but flows ontologically from Christ's body, which, although sanctified on the cross, is not yet filled with the entire divine power until its Resurrection and Ascension. The Church is actualized through all these acts, even though it is virtually given at Incarnation. The Church considered as being established at the foot of the cross, after the full satisfaction has been paid off, is a Church exclusively understood as the earthly society of those who settled their conflict with God through Christ. But the Church is an eschatological community, or its maturation, extended from Christ's risen body. The theory that everything has been resolved through the acquittal of the price for sin on the cross, and not through the deification of the body as source of our deification, considers the Resurrection as only the recompense given to Christ for accepting the cross, not as the cornerstone that supports the entire work of the salvation and deification of the body, as the foundation for the salvation and deification of human beings.

We realize, however, that certain Catholic theologians today go beyond the "narrow" Catholic soteriology of the past. On the basis of a persistent analysis of the biblical texts, the Catholic theologian Thüsing declares,

> [Catholic] soteriology suffers, in my opinion, from a narrowness that fixes the sight upon the past event of the cross on the Golgotha. Such narrowness is not found in the New Testament, notwithstanding the emphasis placed there on the cross. Instructive is the place from Rom 8:34: He through whom God works, saving and justifying, is the crucified and risen Christ in His identity; but in this important declaration, the emphasis is evidently placed more strongly on Jesus's state of Resurrection

> and on His life "at the right hand of God" than on His death on the cross.[16]

This theologian cautions Rahner—who saw in the Resurrection of Christ only "the valid remainder of Christ's Person and of His cause" through the Father's approval of the saving act achieved on the cross [17]—that Christ's Resurrection means also the "transformation" of Christ: "Christ's 'transformation' is a notion contrary to the simple preservation of Christ's image, which the disciples obtained during His life on earth. The Resurrection means the transformation of the pre-Paschal work into a real and present work of the living Jesus upon the community and upon the world."[18] This transformed Jesus has a decisive role in the saving work after the Resurrection. This means that the world benefits not only from an external forgiveness on the basis of a juridical satisfaction offered by Christ on the cross, but it, too, is subjected to a transformation through the present work of Christ, who is full of the divine life at the right hand of the Father.

Generally, this theologian, who considers himself as the theologian who will make ancient Christology accessible to the people of today, finds that Rahner's Christology and soteriology remain confined by scholastic Christology and soteriology, in comparison to the Christology and soteriology of the New Testament, which are larger and more profound. He considers that he has to put forward two critiques as regards Rahner's ideas: "The first concerns an insufficient understanding of the New Testament soteriology, which deals with the category of sacrifice; the second concerns a soteriological orientation which has not yet been sufficiently freed from the narrowness of the classical Church soteriology (narrowness that can be surpassed even by the soteriology of the New Testament)."[19]

As regards the category of sacrifice in the New Testament—which is not identical to the cultic-sacrificial category or the Judaic and pagan cultic-sacrificial ones—Thüsing considers that the "classical" Catholic soteriology does not work sufficiently with the New Testament dimension "for us" and is infused more with the category of "reconciliation" as reestablishment of communion (2 Cor 5:18ff.).

New Testament soteriology, the only one that can form the basis for a soteriology accessible to the person of today, is exactly one that regards salvation as restoring communion with God through the present work of Christ, who, being man, is at the same time at the right hand of the Father:

> The New Testament faith in particular in Jesus who is living now and in His work is the premise for a soteriology that can be relevant today. The blood of Jesus is saving, according to St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, according to the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John, not so much the blood that was shed on the Golgotha as the interpretation of "classical" soteriology; but because communion with the present living Jesus is saving, because He is the crucified and the risen One in His identity. Both the Gospel of St. John and the Epistle to the Hebrews show communion with Jesus as being saving, because according to the Gospel conception Jesus always bears the wounds of His death and—according to the Epistle to the Hebrews—in the definitive persistence of His "theocentric" surrender through the Cross, He is directed toward the Father. As the Jews present it, He carries His "transfigured" blood, that shows in the "Holy of Holies" in heaven the persistence of His surrender before the Father, and He intervenes for us. The communion with Jesus, who accepts death and who is received through it in glory, is decisive.[20]

What this theology is saying coincides with the teaching on salvation presented in this chapter and based on the Holy Fathers, on the sacrifice that establishes communion, and on the perfecting of communion through love. This Catholic exegete acknowledges that the Holy Fathers were the most faithful interpreters of the New Testament.

Without a doubt, Christ's blood shed on the cross is not ignored in the teaching of the Fathers, because we partake of it in the Holy Eucharist and it represents concretely Christ's state of sacrifice, which becomes permanent, as well as the purity to which Christ took His body by suffering the passions unmingled with sin. One cannot approve of the sliding into a spiritualism that ignores the body in the relationships between persons, and in this case between the Person of Christ and human persons.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ONE WORK OF SALVATION: JESUS AS RISEN LORD AND KING

Jesus Christ did not and does not exert only the ministry as Teacher-Prophet and that of High Priest-Sacrifice, but also the one as King. He did not only teach about nor did He only prophesy the Kingdom of Heaven as being the communion of a perfect union with God through His own Person; He did not offer God the Father only His sanctified body, initiating this communion in His Person and attracting into it the human persons who believe by their participation to His sacrifice. He also leads them with authority to the perfect participation in that Kingdom. This dignity is not just the one He has as God since the creation of the world, which He also exerted during His earthly life. It is the royal dignity He also received as man. The Lord Himself acknowledges before Pilate that He is King (John 18:36; Matt 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3). Properly speaking, this is not separated from the ministries as Teacher and High Priest. His yoke was a light one. His power was exerted in both suffering the pain and overcoming the evil spirits that tempted Him through the innocent passions of pleasure and pain. This power was also exerted in accepting death,[1] and that is why it is a sort of continuity between Sacrifice and Resurrection. If He was able to perform powerful acts upon nature and upon illnesses through the body, this is also due to the purity of His body. The Protestant rationalist theology, having no knowledge of this spiritual area, declares Christ's miracles as mythological imaginations. His authority is thus manifested as well through the acts of the Teacher and the High Priest. Even death, although an act of

His priesthood, pertains also to His royal power by the manner in which He suffered and conquered it. The Gospel mentions especially this authority manifested in His teaching: "For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt 7:29). It is evident here that Jesus as man also had royal power before the Resurrection.

His authority was manifested before the Resurrection not only as an authority felt in their souls by those who became close to Him and in the commandments He gave regarding the establishing of the Church and the life the believers were supposed to live, but also as authority over nature through the healing of the sick and through raising some from the dead. When He "rebuked" the winds and the sea and they become calm, those who marveled, exclaimed, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (Matt 8:27). The Holy Fathers explained this obedience of the winds and sea, as well as the awe by which all were seized at the Lord's death, by referring them to the Lord, their Creator and Sustainer. One can see in these extraordinary phenomena the link between the creating Word and His words, or their created echoes embodied in things. These follow their course as long as the creating and sustaining Word maintains His "words" or "reasons" referring to them as basis for the natural development of their materialized echoes. But when the sustaining Word, who also became man and who is in a special relationship with the materialized images of their divine reasons—and of His—suffers, those materialized images are seized with fear. The Word of God then speaks to humans in a different way, having made known in this manner as well the dependence on Him of the rational makeup of things, as the supreme Personal reason that became also their Personal human reason.

In any case, the authority Christ exerted over souls was not only the authority of His divine glory, but also the authority of love that was in harmony with His *kenosis*. He exerted it at the same time through the truth He was preaching and through the sacrifice in which His love was manifested, the truth that heralded the Kingdom of God as the kingdom of love. That is why He captured hearts through the joy in which they would participate on the path of love under His leadership and authority. Acknowledging before Pilate that He is King, Jesus declares that His Kingdom is not of this world, that is to say, like the kingdoms of this world. He stresses this by saying, "For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice" (John 18:37).

Through His Resurrection Christ is raised to full royal authority so that it may also be manifested in His Ascension, Sitting at the Right Hand of the Father, leading the work of salvation, the Second Coming in glory, and the Last Judgment. After the Resurrection Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt 28:18). And St. Paul the Apostle says, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name" (Phil 2:9). He does not keep to Himself the glory to which He is raised, but He spreads it over us because He received it for us. The authority He gives to others consists first of all in overcoming sin, just as His authority on earth consisted first of all in controlling the blameless passions so that they would not become sins, something that He has also done by accepting death. "When He who seemed to have taken uncleanliness as man, by completing wisely the prescribed *oikonomia* for us, has ascended in the end to the Father and has attained to His bosom, then the opinion that He was like us in death and uncleanliness was dismissed. It was then that He was glorified as God; the Lord was glorified by all as the Saint of saints, as the one who fills the entire creation with brilliance, giving the spirits of men the ability to fight against everything that might blemish them."[2]

Let us now describe the acts by which Jesus manifests and gains as man His full royal authority.

A. The Resurrection of Christ

i. The Reality of Christ's Resurrection

The critique of liberal theology has for a long time contested Christ's Resurrection, considering it the product of the imagination of some of the disciples, or of some of the women from His inner circle. Today almost all the Protestant theologians accept Christ's Resurrection—even if they doubt some of the places in the New Testament where it is mentioned, and even if they understand in a distinct way the relation of the risen Christ with the historical plane and the importance of His Resurrection for salvation.

The Protestant theologian Berthold Klappert collected these declarations in a special volume[3] in which he published the texts and summed up in the introduction—in agreement with the opinions of these theologians about the reality of the Resurrection—the results admitted in the following conclusions, to which we added our comments:

The reality of the risen Christ's appearances. The risen Christ's appearances were experienced in a real way by a number of the members of the first Christian community. The traditions of these appearances are well documented historically and cannot be explained through a consequent formulation of a legend.[4]

Even if the fixing in writing of these testimonies is of a later date, they derive from the beginning of the community because only on the basis of testimonies from the witnesses from the beginning of the community could this be established. The Christian community could not first come into existence and then after a certain time produce the "myth" about Christ's Resurrection.

Klappert's basis is, in the first place, the indication given by St. Paul the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 15:3–12 about a great number of witnesses to these appearances, the indication that he received with certainty from some of the witnesses to this appearance when he returned from Damascus to Jerusalem, three years after his conversion on the road to Damascus. As regards Paul's conversion, Klappert considers that it took place around the third year after Christ's Resurrection, so he received the testimonies about Christ's appearances in the fifth or sixth year after they took place. It is certain that he found out about these appearances from the community in Damascus, or even before that, from the community in Jerusalem, for otherwise neither of the communities could have been established. He must have heard about them even from the faithful in Jerusalem before he left for Damascus, even if he did not believe them then. Only the persistent testimony of the witnesses to Christ's appearances could be the basis for the establishment of these communities and could have made him determined to go to Damascus. But Paul's conversion must have taken place much earlier: a few weeks or months after Pentecost.

The psychological explanation of the risen Christ's appearances within the framework of the Jewish apocalyptic literature, which took shape beginning with the time of the Maccabees, is groundless given the fact that that the apocalyptic literature made mention only of a resurrection of all the dead at the end of the world, not of a single person within the framework of the present world.

The acceptance of a psychological chain reaction, assuming that the disciples were men with visionary dispositions ("the subjective vision hypothesis"), is also groundless for the reason that the various appearances do not follow in close sequence. At least the ones to James (1 Cor 15:5) and to Paul took place with a great distance in time between them.

Moreover, the preaching about Christ's Resurrection could not have taken place in Jerusalem without the assumption that the tomb was empty. The Jews could not invalidate this preaching by referring to the existence of the body in the tomb, but they resorted instead to the claim that the body was stolen.

Finally, one has to take into account the fact that the witnesses to the risen Christ's appearances were so convinced that they were appearances of the risen Christ, and they could inspire so much trust in those to whom they communicated them, that they were able to not just give a cold declaration in response to a certain question, but considered as their duty the permanent testimony to this fact, out of their own initiative; they considered this as such a passionate cause of their own existence that almost all of them were able to die martyrs' deaths because of this testimony.

"Subjective visions" do not give such an assurance to those who have them. The witnesses experienced a reality beyond the objective and subjective plane—a reality even more objective than all objectivity, a reality of which their subjectivity partook.[5]

THE CORPORALITY OF THE RISEN CHRIST. Almost all contemporary Protestant theologians acknowledge that Christ has risen in the body, contrary to H. Grass, who, based on the fact that St. Paul reminds us of the empty tomb and speaks of a spiritual body (Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:35; 2 Cor 5:1; Phil 3:20), affirms that the material body remained in the tomb, Christ having an entirely new, immaterial body after the Resurrection. However, Klappert, in accord with Wilckens[6] and Rengstorf,[7] observes that Paul speaks only of a "transformation" that the body undergoes through the Resurrection. For the risen body is not simply brought back to life as the Jews of that time believed, but is "transformed." According to St. Paul, the Resurrection is not a simple return to life of the old body, nor is it a creation of a new body out of nothing, but a *radical transformation of the mortal body through a creating operation performed upon* *the old body*. There is no evidence in St. Paul of an evolutionary thinking that would identify a natural continuity between the dead body and the risen one, or would see in the risen body the final point of the dead body's natural evolution. Neither is it a Gnostic-dualist thinking that would deny any connection between the old and the new corporality.[8] "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Phil 3:20–21).

We also mention that if the disciples did not recognize the corporality in the One who appeared to them, namely His corporality before death, they would not have been convinced of and could not have spoken about Christ's *Resurrection*.

The theologians mentioned above who speak of the Lord's "transformation" through resurrection avoid mentioning that this "transformation" is His "pneumatization." St. Paul the Apostle speaks of this "pneumatization" in 2 Corinthians 5:16 and 3:18. It is the effect of the Holy Spirit's most intensive operation in Christ's body that gives it a transparence and makes it irradiate light or glory. This irradiation is at the same time the mode of the most intense communion, in which the Person overwhelmingly impresses through the body, making it transparent. It is said in the hymns of the Church on Thomas Sunday that Jesus's side (rib) touched by Thomas was fiery and only Christ's condescension protected him from being burned. This fire can also be considered as intense warmth of the divine love, which is now being communicated without hindrance through the resurrected body. This operation of the Spirit is also a sanctification that does not take place where there is no effort toward purification from the pleasures that thicken the body and where one does not renounce egoism; in Christ the renunciation was carried all the way to the acceptance of death. St. Paul says that the resurrected body is a spiritual body (σῶμα πνευματικόν), which penetrates and changes its separate modality of existence. Hence it cannot be perceived according to the conditions of this existence.

The fundamental error of the contradictions between the "liberal" and the "fundamentalist" Protestants was that of having discussed the material and scientific issues of the Resurrection. Thus one reaches the banal opposition between objective and subjective, whereas the resurrected body is real without being objectified because it is the matter penetrated by the Spirit. Only faith, far from being subjective, is the faculty awakened in us by the Spirit that makes us penetrate this "pneumatized" order.[9] For in Orthodoxy, faith also has virtue as "knowledge," but this is not found in Protestantism.

ii. The Relationship between the Risen Christ and the Historical Plane

As regards the relationship between Christ's risen body and the plane of historical reality, Klappert considers, in accord with the great majority of Protestant theologians, that the Resurrection and the nature of Christ's risen body cannot be known with the means of historical research, but only through faith. Their base premise is the anticipated notion adapted by today's human person about what is historically possible (*Vorverständnis des historisch Möglichen*).

According to Ernst Troeltsch,[10] there are three axioms at the basis of the critical-historical method: (a) only what manifests verisimilitude is admissible in critical-historical research; (b) there is a correlation between all the historical phenomena (reciprocal influences, the relation between cause and effect); and (c) the analogy matters, namely the immanently uniform character of everything that occurs.

On the basis of these, Troeltsch says, "Observing the analogies between the past phenomena of the same kind gives us the possibility to attribute verisimilitude to a certain fact." On the contrary, when a fact is affirmed without analogy to another, its verisimilitude is denied. From this point of view, because the Resurrection is a fact without analogy to any other historical fact, there is no possibility of verifying it through historical means.

Christ's Resurrection as a unique and creative act of God and His intervention in our world—a world of death with no return—an act that surpasses the immanence of earthly existence or its causality, which never leads to overcoming death, cannot be understood through the methods by which the historical phenomena are known and which, in the case of human persons tied to the corruptible body, always end up in their definitive death as individual persons. This is what the Holy Fathers said: that the corruption of creation cannot be overcome in and of itself; only Christ as incarnate God was able to overcome it.

The question arises: is it possible for something that cannot be explained by historical causality, does not have an analogy in the phenomena derived from it, and as such cannot be explained by this analogy, to have a certain connection or contact with history? Is such a fact a pure mythological invention?

Klappert, in accord with H. v. Campenhausen and even with Grass, admits that Christ's Resurrection has a connection with history. Grass says, "The Resurrection, although a metahistorical event that surpasses common history, has a side that opens up toward history. A certain circle of people participate in it and is touched by it; a circle that in its turn has a connection with certain places, times and circumstances . . . This side of a fact of the revelation turned toward history should be studied in order to know it, if it is certain and worth believing it."[11] And Campenhausen shows that, even though the event of the Resurrection itself is not accessible to the means of critical research, historical research is able to go back to Paschal appearances and the empty tomb.[12]

Nevertheless, the above-mentioned theologians consider that these appearances, being subjected by those who preached them to one out of many possible interpretations, form in fact the object of faith.

We believe that one can go further into recognizing the historical character of the Resurrection. *If the persons to whom the risen Christ appeared are historical persons, through them it was possible to verify*, according to all the rules of historical method, if not the manner of Christ's Resurrection and the characteristics of His risen body, in any case *the fact of the Resurrection*. It does not have verisimilitude in the analogy with other historical phenomena, but it responds otherwise to the demands of verifying methods for a historical fact. Considering that verisimilitude is a "premise" or a "prejudgment" that a researcher has before any research is done, he does not have the right to repudiate, on the basis of this "subjective" apriority, a fact that is proven through research to be real.

That is why W. Pannenberg was right to go further and to affirm that the fact of the Resurrection is accessible not only to faith, but also to "anyone who has eyes to see." According to him, it is a historical fact that can be established by any layperson if that person does not approach it with the *prejudice of unbelief*.[13] Against those who counterpose a value more or less subjective to facts, Pannenberg counterposes the facts to such a value. Beyond any polyvalent significance, the historical events have the language of "historical facts."[14]

W. Pannenberg bases his position on this issue on a different conception of history, in which he gives serious attention to its contingence by not deriving the events from a rigid, natural causality, but underlying their uniqueness against the affirmation of the essential uniformity of everything that is occurring in it.[15]

Through this Pannenberg offers an objective basis for the fact that the principle of verisimility, or of analogy, is met in the case of the Lord's Resurrection by a fact that discounts them. This basis cannot be other than the opening of history to an order beyond strictly immanent causality, closed in a rigorous repetition of similar phenomena. No one can prove that history does not have such an opening. Not only do evident, unique, and inexplicable forces from the strictly historical plane prove its contingency, but no one can prove incontestably that in the generality of the historical plane's usual facts, factors above the human, immanent ones do not participate in the generating of historical facts. Who can show, in fact, where the boundary of humanity is? Is not humanity open to a superhuman domain whose inspirations and forces influence, help, or hinder it? Without a doubt.

With this opening of history toward a higher realm, history is not removed from its corruptible order or out of that of the definitive death of individual persons. Only Christ's Resurrection has taken a historical Person out of this plane, thus opening the perspective of the future liberation of history in its entirety from this plane. In this sense, the Resurrection is the single event that proves not only that history is made with the collaboration of certain powers above the strictly "immanent" human powers, but also that history in general is destined to be raised to a superior plane, to the plane of the incorruptible and eternal life, to the spiritualized plane where it is not the uniform processes of nature that reign, but the freedom of the human spirit, through which the Holy Spirit renders the body spiritual and transparent. From this point of view, Christ's Resurrection has a deep connection with history, and His Resurrection must illustrate this importance for history, or the beginning of its efficiency as a force of pneumatization and of directing history toward the suprahistorical plane that it opened, or better said, toward the plane of spirituality that transcends it.

Christ's Resurrection is thus not only verifiable, as a fact impenetrable in its content above the contents of historical facts, but it also opens up for us a content of existence from another plane with the greatest efficiency upon history. It has a great and continuous spiritual causality upon history. Because of the Resurrection, history does not move only within the limited or static plane that would not lead us to anything essentially new, but it connects us with a content in which new contents are communicated to history. The Resurrection is connected with history not only through suprahistorical causality that it brought upon history, but also through the role it did and does play in introducing a new mode of life in history. Christ has risen because He conquered through His life the weakness of human nature together with its innocent passions, going in the manifestation of this spiritual strength all the way to accepting death for others. Without fully entering in history as an effect and cause, Christ established a certain connection with history, bringing certain effects into history and playing the role of causality upon it in order to open its access to the overcoming of the mode of existence in a simple, immanent repetition, which leads nowhere, and in order to take history out of the dominion of death.

In this sense, one must take into consideration not only the fact that historical research reaches all the way back to the empty tomb and to certain persons to whom the risen Christ appeared, as well as the fact that, on one hand, the Resurrection has in itself the possibility of being grasped by historical persons and, on the other hand, historical persons are in principle capable of being witnesses—thus of grasping the reality of the superior fact of Christ's Resurrection—but also the fact that the Resurrection's content elevates and enriches the mode of historical life.

With this we turn to the proper purpose of the Resurrection, which consists of its efficiency upon historical humanity.

iii. The Spiritual Irradiation and the Transforming Efficacy of Christ's Resurrection in the World

Protestantism has reduced to a great extent the content of the risen Christ's efficacy upon history. The contemporary Protestant theologians speak of the Resurrection only as a sort of proof that God has accepted Christ's work of redemption on our behalf, and those who go further consider the Resurrection as an application of the forgiveness obtained by Christ on the cross, in the sense that God gives faith to people and thereby the assurance that they are forgiven. For Karl Barth, the Resurrection as Christ's "lifting" from the dead by God is the Father's verdict through which God offers justice to the crucified One and puts the reconciliation into operation.[16] "To sum up, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the great verdict of God, the fulfillment and proclamation of God's decision concerning the event of the cross. It is its acceptance."[17]

Catholic theology is not too far removed from this concept. According to this theology, salvation is given to us because of Christ's sacrifice, not through Christ's sacrificed, risen, and deified body. That is why Hans Urs von Balthasar says, "Through His act [of Christ's Resurrection], God provides at the same time the supreme justification of His Word's truthfulness and the truth of His obedient Son's life."[18]

Closely connected to this is also the concept in Western theology that Christ's Resurrection is not an act of Christ's power, but only of the Father's power upon the dead Christ. It is known that in Eastern thought Christ's cross is itself victorious, for after Christ's death, His soul—full of the Godhead—went into hell, where it could not be held, and it conquered hell and then raised His body as well, which did not lack the Godhead and was not abandoned to corruption. The entire hymnography of the Eastern Church for the feasts of the cross and for Easter affirms this. On the contrary, according to Western theology, Christ has suffered in death man's weakness to the extreme limit so that afterwards the Resurrection would come as a gift from outside, from God the Father. The Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar speaks, like Karl Barth, only of Christ's "lifting" from death as an act of the Father.

This is a natural conclusion following from the understanding of salvation as being achieved through the satisfaction brought by Christ to the Father, or as an act of redemption executed by the Father in a juridical way, as the equivalent of the offense against the divine honor. Christ knows death as total exhaustion of His human being, somehow separated from the divine Hypostasis, having no power in Himself to rise again. It was the Father who had to raise Him from this abyss of nonbeing, once He was satisfied with the acceptance by Christ of this coming out of the abyss, as opposed to the offense of human beings against the Father through their disobedience and pride in attempting to exist by themselves. Balthasar declares, "Thus to the Father is universally attributed the initiative of the Son's Resurrection. He is the one who acts and acts exactly as He does with man, namely as Creator, perfecting His creating action through the resurrection of the dead. The affirmation that the Father raised Jesus Christ recurs frequently in the New

Testament."[19] And H. U. von Balthasar mentions a few verses from the New Testament to support his reasoning.

In fact, there exist a number of such places (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15; 5:30; 13:37; 17:31; Rom 4:24; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Cor 6:14; 15:15; 2 Cor 4:14; Gal 1:1; Col 2:12; 1 Thess 1:10). But the New Testament does not present Jesus only as an object of the Resurrection (ὅν ανέστησεν) in the places mentioned, but in those same places and in many others Jesus is presented as the subject of the act of Resurrection (Matt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Mark 9:31; Luke 18:33; 24:34; John 2:22; 1 Cor 15:4, 12, 16–17; 2 Cor 5:15; 1 Thess 4:14; 2 Tim 2:8). Orthodox Christians greet each other between Easter and Ascension with the expression: "Christ is risen!" And the Orthodox Church hymns and glorifies Christ as the subject of the Resurrection and of the act through which death was overcome: "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the tombs bestowing life."

By alternately attributing the act of the Resurrection to the Father and to the Son one shows their cooperation, which includes an intense cooperation of the Holy Spirit.

The Father from whom the Spirit proceeds and in whom the Son also is, spiritualizes the Lord's body through the Spirit. But where the Spirit is active, Christ cannot be an object; He, too, is active. In this common act of supreme pneumatization of the body, the supreme communion between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is achieved. Only because of this full pneumatization will the Spirit irradiate into the world from the Son's body, the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and will be sent into the world through Christ as man. For Christ is not passive in this irradiation of the Spirit from His body.

St. Cyril of Alexandria unites the Father and the Son in the act of the Resurrection when he says, "By being the might of God the Father, the Son Himself has made His body alive."[20] "Christ was raised by the glory of the Father" (Rom 6:4).

Even though he speaks, forced by the texts in the New Testament, about a role of the Spirit in Christ's Resurrection, Hans Urs von Balthasar attributes this role to His meeting with Christ after His Ascension into Heaven, thus inferring that Christ's Ascension and the sending of the Spirit follow immediately after His Resurrection.[21]

If Christ did not undergo the Resurrection as an object but was its co-subject together with the Father, it follows that He Himself conquered or participated in conquering death, exercising in this act His power as King, which is not only as God but also as man. In fact, only by recognizing this do we maintain the hypostatic union in all its reality with its resulting implications upon the human nature.

According to the teaching of the Holy Fathers, Christ deified the body even during the course of His earthly life, filling it with power to remain pure through His efforts. In death the body could not be emptied of this deification. It is the teaching of the Church that deification was not separated in death either from His soul or from His body. *Thus, Christ's Resurrection was not only the result of the Father's decree, but it was prepared also by this union of His humanity with the Godhead through His divine Hypostasis, which also bore the human nature.*[22]

As such, Christ's risen body is not just a guarantee given to us by the Father that we, too, will rise again, but it is also a source of divine life for us in the earthly life, a source of strength and purity. It is a source of strength and of pneumatization in order to maintain ourselves and to advance in purity and in the pneumatization that leads to resurrection. On this pneumatization depends the progress in the openness which, being a continual personalization and strengthening of our person, is at the same time a strengthening of communion between us and God and among ourselves.

Since the time of His appearance on earth, Christ irradiates from His body this power and glory, or He makes Himself known in such a bright transparence, which most of the time overwhelms the body and which is made visible only when Christ wants, and even in the bright light of His impressive power as a Person. All the Holy Fathers as well as the hymns of the Orthodox Church address the issue of the effect of Christ's risen body on us. "Christ is risen, let us purify our senses," says one of the Church hymns. St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "For Christ has risen, destroying death, to save us from corruption and to persuade us, by eliminating the grief caused by it, to joyfully shout: 'You have turned my mourning into dancing; You have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy' (Ps 30:11)."[23]

That Christ was not raised as an object from a death that would have reduced Him to complete powerlessness is explained by the Holy Fathers in the fact that He had manifested His power even before the Resurrection of the body in tearing down the gates of hell and in the liberation from there of those who had hope before His coming. He conquers hell with His human soul united with the Godhead. Because of this, He is the first soul that cannot be held in hell, but escapes it. By the irradiation of His divine power, He liberates from hell the souls of those who had believed beforehand in the promises of His coming, of those who had contemplated in the Logos foretold in the Old Testament the intention of His coming into the body. Leontius of Byzantium says, "Therefore we said that the soul, not because of its nature (for this was the same as that of all the other souls), but because of the Word's Godhead with which He descended into hell, was—in addition to not being held in there—able to break the ties of those held there and who believed in Him."[24] The Person of the Word who entered through His soul into a direct relationship with those souls has kept them in this relationship, thus in the paradise He has established for them and for all those who will die in Him.

About the dominion obtained by Christ over the faithful souls of those in hell, St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "It is for this that Christ died and rose again so that He might rule over the dead as well."[25] There are certain nuances implied in these words. At the moment He descended into hell, Christ was at the beginning of His Resurrection and therefore at the beginning of His royal dominion. He was still dead in the body, "but made alive by the Spirit" (1 Pet 3:18).

The Church hymns from the Vespers of Great Saturday tell about a sort of beginning of the resurrection of the souls from hell: "Today hell cries out, saying: it would have been better if I did not receive Him who was born of Mary; for He destroyed my power by His coming here, and broke down the heavy gates. Being God, He raised the souls held here." Or: "Today hell cries out, sighing: my dominion has been destroyed; the Shepherd was crucified and Adam was raised."

But Christ liberates the souls in hell because from His soul irradiates the power of the Spirit following the sacrifice of His body, of His total surrender to God. His power manifested in hell is not separated from His sacrifice, thus neither is it separated from His body, even though He does not go there to suffer the hopeless anguish of hell for those souls, for in this case He would not be able to save them. In His suffering on the cross, the suffering for them, too, was implied. And because the suffering on the cross was compassion for humans—this compassion remains until the end of the world—Christ was able to have a compassionate suffering for those souls in hell, too. This compassionate suffering is at the same time a saving power. Mercy accompanies Christ everywhere and at all times. That is why we are to ask for it always. Because Christ is also man, His mercy cannot lack an aspect of suffering, either.

On the other hand, we should not consider entirely inappropriate the words from 1 Peter 3:19—"preached to the spirits in prison"—because Christ announced to these spirits their liberation and the future resurrection of the body; generally, He brought them the great news of the salvation accomplished by Him. Thus He accomplished there His teaching-prophetic role because, as it was said before, the three ministries are never separated.

Hans Urs von Balthasar declares that in this Eastern teaching that the Resurrection begins first in hell, a teaching represented also in the icon of the Resurrection in the Eastern Church, there takes place "an anticipation which places the Easter event on Saturday and a transformation of the objective and subjective triumph into the subjective and active triumph of Christ."[26] In fact, the Resurrection is not moved ahead to Saturday, but one considers its beginning on Saturday in the act of conquering hell, which held the souls separated for eternity from their bodies.

This act of conquering is in fact an active manifestation of Christ. Christ is in hell not in a purely passive state from which He would be raised by the Father on Sunday. Properly speaking, Christ first conquers hell with His soul because the Holy Spirit, united with His divine Hypostasis, produces first the deification, or the full pneumatization, of the soul after He has suffered death until the end for God and for humans. Thus He enters into perfect communion with God and makes room in Himself for the Holy Spirit in a complete way. From this soul thus filled with the Holy Spirit irradiates in the souls of those in hell who had hoped in Him the power that liberates them from the dominion of hell.

From Christ's fully deified, or pneumatized, soul will then irradiate the power that also will raise, or will pneumatize, His body from the tomb. That is why the Resurrection begins in hell. This is implicitly said in 1 Peter 4:6.

Balthasar further observes that "whereas the Western icons of the Resurrection depict Christ rising always alone, the Eastern Church makes us see the soteriological and social aspect of the redeeming work." [27]

In fact, the two modes of iconographic representation of the Resurrection are in solidarity with the two conceptions of salvation in Christ.

In Western theology, Christ, having no power in Himself that might be manifested in the Resurrection, is raised alone from the extreme helplessness of death by the Father, who will then allocate a created grace to those who believe, a grace given to Christ for His meritorious act that in fact He does not need. In Orthodox theology, Christ irradiates from Himself, or from His soul and body, the uncreated energy, starting this irradiation even in hell and permeating with it those who believed in His coming before His coming in the flesh. Through His sacrifice, once it had been accomplished on Golgotha, He entered into full communion not only with the Father, but also with human beings, first with the bodiless souls before He resurrected His body.

Hans Urs von Balthasar also acknowledges a certain power that the risen Christ transmitted through His appearances. He sums up this power as follows:

> All the accounts of those to whom the risen Christ appeared tell of His appearances as encounters with Him. They do not initiate the encounter, as in the subjective visions, but He does. "He is the one who takes the initiative of the meeting from which the witnesses benefit. Be it a word, a sign, a greeting, a blessing, an address, an invocation, a message, a teaching, a consolation, a sending or the establishing of a communion, it is always a free gift."[28]

The people's senses take part as in any encounter, but the emphasis is placed not on their experience, but on the One whom they meet; this is the living Christ Himself. This is expressed by the word "appeared" (ὤφθη), used in the decisive places (for Peter's encounter with Him: Luke 24:34; Acts 13:31; 1 Cor 15:5–8; and for His appearance to Paul: Acts 9:17; 16:9). This word expresses something more than a vision. Sometimes He who appears persists in order to impress those who do not know Him (Luke 24:16; John 20:15; 21:4). That is why one can speak of real "encounters." The initiative belongs to the one who appears and who persists in order to make His identity known as that of Jesus known by them before death. The word of Him who appears has a great role in these encounters. He wants to convince them through His word that it is He whom they knew before the Crucifixion; He speaks familiar words, by which He shows His disciples that He knows them.

He who appears captivates, converts, and engages those to whom He appears. This shows the initiative and the objective, superior act of Him who appears. The disciples are aware that not only are they known, but that their hearts are moved. His intention is to strengthen their faith, even to give them a superior faith. And only He can do this by His compelling presence as the risen God.

This action that convinces and converts hearts makes the disciples acknowledge definitively the Godhead of the risen One. In its light is vindicated His claim before the Resurrection that He be known as God. Now His power as God is clearly felt. In the encounters with Him after the Resurrection, He is for the first time venerated as God (Matt 28:9, 17; John 20:28). Only now for the disciples is the complete light shed on the life and teaching of Jesus before the Resurrection and even on the references about Him in the entire Old Testament. Everything becomes coherent in their thought about the Old Testament; everything is linked to Jesus and refers to Him. Henceforth in their entire preaching they will refer to the Old Testament as leading to Him.[29]

These encounters determine the beginning of their mission. Christ sends them now with a power to which they cannot respond with indifference. "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21; cf. Matt 28:18–20; Luke 24:47–49; Acts 1:8). He sends them to the entire world because Christ has dominion over all. Christ's appearances occur precisely in view of their sending.[30]

But the Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers affirm that the risen Christ irradiates out of Himself to those who see Him much more than an assurance that He is God and much more than a sending, as Balthasar says. He irradiates from Himself the light and the power of the Spirit, filling others, too, with this Spirit. They receive the conviction that He is God through the Spirit communicated to them, the Spirit who fills them with power after He pneumatized Christ's body. This power continues to be communicated after the Ascension, and it will gradually spiritualize our bodies as well, taking them toward resurrection by radiating the Spirit within us (Rom 8:9–11). "The bush did not burn engulfed by the flame, but rather Christ enlightens us through the Holy Spirit, and He is in us through Him."[31] By partaking of His holy body, we also become "saints."[32] For from this body, sanctity irradiates as an operation of the Holy Spirit. "Through the operation of the Spirit, Christ saves us from the passions hidden within the mind."[33]

Consequently, the power from the Lord's risen body continues to be communicated to the disciples and to all those who believe in Him even after Christ's Ascension into Heaven. In the beginning it is communicated through the descent of the Holy Spirit and then in the Mysteries of the Church. St. Paul says, "He has made you alive together with Him" (Col 2:13). "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him . . . For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col 2:6–7, 9).

This does not mean that we are given everything that Christ has from the beginning and that there is no effort on our part to assimilate more and more of what Christ has, namely His humanity. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18). In the risen Christ there is the divine life because in Him there is also the dying of man assumed by His own person, and both of these are active in us. "We are always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (2 Cor 4:10). Due to the power of death and also of His Resurrection, we die to sin but are made alive for God. "And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who dwells in you" (Rom 8:10–11). There are many other places like these. Their content was made explicit in many forms by the Holy Fathers. This content can be summed up as follows: the body of the risen Christ is a body raised to the full spiritual transparence, and in this nature it was filled with holiness, with deification, being like this before the Father. But this holiness, transparence, and deification are also communicated to us by partaking of His body and, therefore, Christ's Resurrection means not only His communion with the Father, but also His entrance into full communion with us. This communion is first latent for us, having to become actualized through Christ's dwelling in our being through His Spirit.

Christ and His sacrificed body, thereby sanctified, pneumatized, and forever transparent before the Father, is like a sweet fragrance before Him, thus manifesting His full surrender, as man, to the Father and His full communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit. This is the spiritual meaning of the expression "offering of sweet smelling fragrance" so often used by St. Cyril of Alexandria.

Christ's state of a sacrifice of sweet fragrance before the Father is the state of total surrender to the Father, opposed to any possibility of His self-affirmation as man. It is a state destined to be the source of a similar state in other human persons. That is why Christ must permanently be in such a state. "So He determined to preserve in His body the signs of His death and always to have with Him the marks of the wounds which were once inflicted on Him when He was crucified. Thus it might be evident in the distant future that He had been crucified and pierced in His side for the sake of His servants, and together with His ineffable splendor He might regard these as an ornament for a King."[34] These wounds are not just memories, but they have a permanent actuality in Christ. They are also His power that radiates in us. He is in a continuous surrender to the Father, as a source of sacrificing death to sin for every human being, as a source from which everyone partakes of His sacrifice's sweet fragrance in order to present it to the Father as opposed to the bad fragrance of sin, of the affirmation of one's independence in pleasure and arrogance:

> There is no doubt that sin exists in us as a sad state with a bad fragrance. The sad and foul smelling life is transformed through Christ into joy. Through faith Christ transmits a sweet fragrance to the human person. We offer ourselves to God through Christ, for He is the one who purifies sinners by His sacrifice and washes spiritually the unclean. Through Christ we also offer ourselves, and in Him we, the unclean, have the courage to approach. But we approach through faith, and we offer ourselves to the Father as a sweet fragrance only if we cease to exist for ourselves, if we only have Christ in us as a spiritual sweet fragrance.[35]

This state of real sacrifice in which He finds Himself is also a state of real compassion for us, one that permeates us as well.

As can be seen, holiness as spiritual transparence or as sweet fragrance, thus as Christ's surrender as man to God, makes us participants in it and consequently in the Father's love for us, realizing our communion with Him. As the priests and the leaders of Israel went with Moses into the mountain, likewise we go to the Father with Christ and draw near to Him, being cleansed in the blood of Christ, who "offered His body in a sweet fragrance."[36] Through Christ "our offering is with the Father, and we arrived near Him."[37] We obtained this intimacy with the Father because we entered into a familiarity with Christ, His Son. "God the

Father makes worthy to see and knows only those who have a spiritual familiarity with the Son and who recognized themselves in Him through the Spirit and have become rich in Him."[38] He makes us worthy on account of Christ's surrender, but also because of His Son's compassion toward us, a state in which He remains permanently. "The spiritual familiarity" with the Son means the union with Christ through the Spirit, who is His transparence for us in order to make us also transparent to Him, permeating us with His body in the Eucharist.

As we become transparent to Christ, He is no longer either objective or subjective reality for us, but He and we are in a real unity beyond objectivity and subjectivity. He is in us and we are in Him without being confused. In our relationship with Christ we surpassed subjectivity; we are in Christ as in the most objective reality and the most subjective at the same time. This bodily transparence means also a spiritual transparence and through both of them the transparence of Christ as person is realized. This is His great sensibility and love for us. This makes us, too, sensible toward Him and delicate with one another.

Through the Resurrection, because His transparent and love-irradiating body permeates us, He Himself became our own together with the soul and the Godhead in Him. And we, by being spiritualized, became Christ's own because we opened ourselves to Him through faith. "Christ dwells fully (τέλειος) in us through the partaking of the Spirit, who is the same, as St. Paul says" (1 Cor 12:4).[39] "By shedding His blood for us, He has eliminated death and has destroyed corruption; thus He makes us His own, as the ones who no longer live our life, but rather His life."[40] We respond to His love with our love, by which we deny ourselves as He denied Himself.

Those who are in this intimacy with the Son receive through the Spirit a broadening of their life and knowledge from the largeness of Christ's life as man, advancing toward the spiritual stature of Christ: "Christ offers Himself to us dead, risen, and ascended into heaven, spiritually enlarging through the Spirit the hearts of those who receive Him."[41] Christ's life became our life. The incorruptibility of His risen body works in us in view of our resurrection. Our horizon has been widened through the risen Christ and has surpassed the horizon of physical and psychic phenomena, which in fact repeat themselves, ending in death. The law closed off our horizon, leaving us outside of the communion with God in Christ. "We broaden ourselves through faith and love, but only if we are rooted in Christ. For the law was narrow, and so was the mind by worshipping the idols."[42] Together with Christ, who ascended through sacrifice and Resurrection, we ascend to the peaks of the knowledge of God and of divine life through purification from the selfish passions. Through the transparence of Christ's body we now see with the unveiled face the unrestricted and eternal glory to which man was raised in Him. Thus it is also mirrored in us (2 Cor 3:18).[43]

If the Son presents to the Father the sweet fragrance of man who has totally surrendered to Him, and together with Himself He presents us as well, the Son communicates to us not only the power of this sweet fragrance of His surrender and of His renunciation of all egoism, but also the sweet fragrance of the knowledge of God reached by man in Christ—or the sweet fragrance of the highest knowledge of God through Christ's humanity. "Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to us, through the holy apostles, as a sweet fragrance of the knowledge of God the Father."[44]

The glory we see is the same with the irradiation of this sweet fragrance, but at the same time is the irradiation of the unique, divine-human Person for whom the body is no barrier. Even though the body is the means by which we experience the communion with the Person of Christ, we forget His body just as we forget ours, as St. Paul says (2 Cor 5:16; 12:2). Certainly, all these represent to a great extent a potentiality for almost all believers; it is, however, a real potentiality from which we draw power to move toward our resurrection in the life to come. "The things in Christ are a new creation, and we are renewed in Him toward sanctification, incorruption, and life." [45]

The risen Christ is the beginning of the new creation because He actually includes all believers in the sacrificed and risen state of His body not only through the commonality of nature He has with us, but also through our personal inclusion in Him and through His dwelling within us.

Needless to say, this represents also our inclusion in His memory (He includes in this potentiality even those who do not believe in Him). He presents in Himself to the Father all who believe in Him; therefore, they are attached to Him. They are seen in Him by the Father, but He also has them inscribed in His eternal memory, and the Father sees them in His memory. At the same time the Father sees Christ imprinted in them in His state of sacrifice and Resurrection.

The Father sees in Christ's face all those who believe in Him, because on His face is reflected Christ's thought about everyone, and in the face of every believer the Father sees Christ imprinted. He sees Christ advancing in the transformation of every believer after His image until He takes him to His state of resurrection. Herein lies the progressive communion of the Father with all who believe in His Son. Thus, by uniting us with Himself, Christ unites us with the Father. "He came all the way to us for us so that we might get, together with Him and in Him, near to the Father . . . By partaking of Him through the Spirit, we are united through Him with God the Father."[46]

Through Christ's risen body irradiates unhindered the power of Him who made this body incorruptible, leading all those who will partake of Him to resurrection and incorruption, leading even the entire creation to incorruptibility and transparence, namely to the maximum transfiguration and communicability between persons through the Spirit as well as to a total personalization of the cosmos in Christ and in human beings; for there is an ontological continuity between the matter of the body and the matter of the cosmos:

> For according to the physical birth Christ is the brother of those descending from Adam, the forefather in this present age; but once, through Resurrection, He rendered His dead body spiritual and offered it to us for nourishment. He instills in us through that body the power of vivification toward the resurrection after death; by this He became the cause of such a spiritual nature in the age to come and of an immortal and incorruptible state of our corruptible body of now . . . For it is for us who will be resurrected with spiritual bodies that He will reestablish the bodies around us into incorruption, corresponding to those who dwell, walk, live, and remain in them; creation itself will be liberated from the slavery to corruption toward the glory of the freedom of the children of God, who became man as well as our brother and father who says: Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.[47]

This state will represent a victory of persons and of their freedom over the nature that subjugates, a victory of their communion from the communion with the divine, supreme Person who became the human Person liberated, by willingly suffering death, from the dominion of death, which is the supreme tyranny of the hardened nature, the supreme enemy of the person, or of the interpersonal communion. Everything that is now given to us as nature will be personalized and will serve the eternal personal communion. The royal glory of the supreme Person become also human Person will turn into the glory of all who will open themselves to the central, supreme Person.

The supreme Person will be visible through all, and all persons will see each other through all. There will no longer be seen a nature that makes the person difficult to be perceived. We will see God "face to face," but we will also see each other "face to face," not veiled by the nature subjected to death and manifested in the material needs, in physical weaknesses, and in diseases, or by the nature become exclusive through all kinds of passions. In this age, by partaking of Christ we announce His death, which remains in our existence in its bodily form in order to help us fulfill our existence and transform it for our benefit through our death to egoism:

> When He will come in the glory of the Father, we will no longer offer our due confession about His passion, because we will know Him clearly "face to face" as God . . . For then we will know Him not from what pertains to man, but from what pertains to the true God, the *oikonomia* by which He became incarnate having passed. The reasons for the Incarnation will cease and a greater knowledge will come about; there will be a brightness, a vision, and an understanding of the glorious salvation coming to us from Him.[48]

The body will not cease to exist, but it will be transparent because through it we will see directly God in glory, being completely spiritualized; all and everything will belong to all, beyond the division into subjective and objective, beyond the chains of nature, beyond the passionate struggle to dominate nature and others seen as exterior objects, and beyond everyone's struggle to defend ourselves against others. Only the Resurrection opens for us the perspective so that we may escape the fatality of nature that leads to death; it opens a plane worthy of us and of our aspirations. At the same time it opens the perspective of an increasingly deeper sensibility and gracefulness. Only the Resurrection will liberate us from the wrong struggle to assure an ephemeral existence at the cost of taking advantage of others, at the cost of some imaginary experiences of fulfillment through pleasures and through selfish, empty achievements.

Only the perspective of Resurrection gives us the power to carry on the real struggle required by it: the struggle against passions, the struggle to become sensitive, the struggle for transparence, for communion and for the likeness with Christ; the power of the risen One will sustain us on this path.

B. The Ascension into Heaven and the Sitting at the Right Hand of the Father

According to the Epistle to the Hebrews, Jesus Christ presents Himself with His sacrifice before the Father and then He sits at His right hand, but His sacrifice has an eternal power to purify those who believe (Heb 1:3–4; 9:17–24; 10:12). The book of Revelation expresses this paradox of the permanent validity of His sacrifice and of His glory through the image of the slain Lamb who reigns (Rev 5:12).

From one point of view, Christ has entered with His blood to the Father through His death, and this sacrifice manifested the beginning of its power through the Resurrection. The Father accepts it with its sweet fragrance from the time it is offered, and in its spiritual essence it becomes permanent from the moment of its acceptance shown in the Resurrection of Christ, in which is also manifested the saving power with which Christ was filled from that very moment of His full communion as man with the Father. But for us humans and for the *oikonomia* of salvation the Son remains after the Resurrection, with His body not yet fully pneumatized and therefore on a plane closer to us, from where He could be visible to us anytime He wanted. This was required by the need for the disciples to be convinced of His Resurrection and to receive their call to preach in view of the establishment of the Church.

Various Catholic and Protestant theologians are of the opinion that the Resurrection and the Ascension coincide, because the appearances could be of the ascended Christ after His Resurrection. According to these theologians, only Luke has put a distance between the Resurrection and the Ascension.[49] But questions then arise: why do the appearances cease after forty days? Why do they not continue at least as long as the apostles live? There is no other answer than the fact that during His appearances Christ's body was less pneumatized. Some believe that one should not talk at all about the Ascension into Heaven, as one should not talk of the Descent into Hell in order to avoid the possibility that Christianity would be accused of the mythological vision of the world in three levels, as does Bultmann.[50] But this world, hell, and heaven are not three spatial levels, but three separate modes of existence.

We think that the more profound reason that the mentioned theologians identify the Resurrection with the Ascension is that for them Christ saves us fully through the satisfaction offered to God, or through the expiation suffered from God through the death on the cross. The proof that God was satisfied by this is in the unique act of Christ's Resurrection, not in a series of acts performed by Christ through which He works directly, in various modes and on various levels, for our salvation and deification.

According to the New Testament, Christ raises His humanity to the fullness of power through which He works upon us in the four successive moments: the Descent into Hell, the Resurrection with the body, the Ascension into Heaven, and the Sitting at the Right Hand of the Father. The Ascension into Heaven and the Sitting at the Right Hand of the Father represent the complete pneumatization and deification of His human body, His being filled to capacity with the divine infinity, and His complete rising to the state of unrestrictedly transparent medium of God's infinite love in its work directed toward us. Undoubtedly, this does not represent the dissolution of Christ's body in the divine infinity.

The time between the Resurrection and the Ascension also served the role, among those already mentioned, of assuring the disciples through palpable acts (for example, Christ eating with them) that He is risen, and through words that He will be with them until the end of time, that is, in His communion with them and with His Church.

The Ascension does not take Christ out of the communion with those who will believe in Him but, on the contrary, it takes this communion to the fullness of a reciprocal interiority with them, due to the ultimate pneumatization reached by His body through the Ascension.[51]

Even in the phase between the Resurrection and the Ascension, the body of Jesus passed through the closed doors and "was always with the disciples," not coming to them, but "rather appearing whenever He wanted."[52] Through the Ascension Jesus takes His body—without ceasing to still have it—to a plane of spirituality so perfect that it is no longer visible, but dwells invisibly in those who believe in Him. The fact that before the Ascension He is with His disciples everywhere and after the Ascension He dwells, with the divine infinity intimately found in Him, in everyone who believes in Him, does not mean a spatial ubiquity of His body. The state of *pneumatization* is something *other than spatial ubiquity*. It is a presence of spiritual depth and height that can be manifested in various degrees of intensity, according to the degree of the power of spiritual grasping or of the faith of him who is open to Christ and thereby "sees" or feels Christ in himself.

This presence is felt by those who believe as His personal presence beyond any visibly corporeal intermediary. Moreover, those who feel Christ's presence feel it not just within themselves, but also in others and sometimes around them, or everywhere, not as a gigantic and spatially extended body, but as the personal, albeit invisible, body of Christ as He had it during His life on earth, in the normal human proportions but still fully transparent. Others, who have not yet progressed to this degree of feeling Jesus's personal presence, feel the effects of His presence; they feel this presence as a power that urges and helps them to have pure thoughts and perform good deeds, a presence that produces in them a state of peace and joy, an experience of their bond with the infinity of His personal love that irradiates from beyond them. This state of ultimate pneumatization of Jesus's body consists not only in the ability to dwell in and be felt by those who believe, as the body borne by Christ's Person, full of helping power to do good, but also in the supreme intimacy with the Father. Jesus is now also with the body where He is with His Godhead—on the divine throne, on the rung of supreme authority, on account of the fact that He is perfectly full within His body as well with the infinitude of the divine life and love. The Son of God no longer lives a *kenosis*, an emptiness of glory in His humanity, but His humanity, too, is full of divine glory. The Godhead has completely overwhelmed His body, or better said, it is transparent and irradiates unhindered through His body without abolishing it. God is man and man is God without ceasing to be both man and God; man is God without ceasing to be man, God is man without ceasing to be God. In Christ, man is God who sustains the universe and leads it toward the deification in which He is. "The Lord ascended to heaven, and by making use of a cloud as a chariot of light, He ascended in glory and has entered the Holy of Holies not made by hand and was seated at the right hand of glory, in heaven, making our creature co-seated and co-God (ὁμόθρονον καὶ ὁμόθεον)."[53]

The incarnate Son's Sitting "at the Right Hand of the Father" shows that the Father gives Him the first place in leading the world to deification, in the work of bringing it into union with God, to its filling with divine infinity in a relationship of unending love with God. The expression "at the right hand of glory" or "at the right hand of God" from the Epistle to the Hebrews (1:3; 10:12) is explained in the sense mentioned by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:25–27: "For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For 'He has put all things under His feet.' But when He says 'all things are put under Him,' it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted." The ultimate goal of Christ's work is to destroy the universal death, that is, to raise creation from the extreme state of weakness produced by its separation from the source of life, which is God; this means the strengthening of our spirit from the divine Spirit irradiating from Him to such an extent that it might overcome the supremacy of the automatism of a hardened nature that leads to death. And this is accomplished by raising human beings into the perfect communion with the personal God, who is infinite in His spiritual might.

God wants the world to be brought to Him through a man, through the human body become a medium fully transparent of His infinite power of life and love; He wants to bring it through His most beloved Son whom He made man for this purpose, so that through Him His infinite love for Him may be extended to all human beings and to the world with which they are in solidarity through creation. By this He attracts to Him those who see in the supreme honor accorded to Christ as man the honor to which they are also called to ascend. Christ the man uses in His work of leading us to deification His methods, which are methods of strengthening our spirit against what is opposed to its freedom: conquering the passions and death of human persons by their strengthening and by cooperation in the manner in which He conquered them in Himself. Thus He continues to exert His royal ministry, combined with that of High Priest and of Sacrifice, to exert His power as a slain Lamb. These are methods of conviction, not of compulsion; they are methods of gaining humans through His love, in which is also included His co-suffering with them. In this way He appeals to their freedom and wants to strengthen their freedom in their effort to work by themselves at overcoming their slavery. He helps them to overcome the evil between themselves through patience, meekness, and delicacy, which He communicates to them from within Himself.

This is the meaning of His remaining in a state of permanent sacrifice as well as the meaning of communicating this state to us through the partaking of His sacrificed Body and of His shed Blood. He rules as a man filled with infinite divine power and glory, which are not used in arrogance for coercing human beings, but they are exerted in love and meekness in order to prove constantly that He considers them His brothers in humanity and wants to raise them to the same power and glory of the freedom and of the love in which He is. Raised to the glory and authority of God, the Man-Christ still remains man in the truest sense of the word and also the man-model to be attained by all who believe in Him. By believing in His co-suffering with us, which at the same time is His power that permeates and elevates our being, the believers ask Him for His "mercy," according Him all the glory: "Lord have mercy." In this expression one finds also the acknowledgement of Him as our Master and that this Master is infinitely merciful and loving, and therefore approachable for us.

When this method accomplishes its purpose, then Jesus as man will also have brought to an end His royal ministry, making all things subject to the Father (1 Cor 15:28), or He will have brought to an end this royal authority as His exclusive dignity because all who believe will have become co-kings with Him, co-masters over the enslaving passions; that is, they will have reached the glory of perfect freedom in the loving relationship with Christ.

If in the ultimate pneumatization of the Lord's body is implied not only a state of complete deification and full intimacy of the Son with the Father, but also His capability to dwell in us with the entire loving power and with the entire infinite life of the Godhead, then the Sitting at the Right Hand of the Father is in harmony with His dwelling in us. It is a common dwelling of Christ and of the Father in us. Christ has become a fully transparent medium of His Godhead and that of the Father for us, because He became as man fully transparent and open to the Father.

This complete indwelling takes place only in the hearts of those who love God after they have purified themselves of the egoism of the passions by fulfilling His commandments, namely, after they open themselves and make themselves transparent to the Holy Spirit in Christ as well as to the infinite spiritual horizon where Christ is. Only in this way do they become God's "heaven" and overcome the separation between the human subject—hardened and become almost object—and the divine subject, raising the entire existence to this state of unity in the Spirit. "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come and make Our home with him" (John 14:23). On this indwelling and on its being conditional upon our love, our ascension depends so exclusively that without them we can participate in the Lord's Resurrection but not in His Ascension, not in our union with Him for eternity.[54] Those who will not share in Christ's Ascension will not have Him in them, but will only know of Him.

Thus, Christ's Ascension into Heaven with the body and the Sitting at the Right Hand of the Father mean His raising as man to the level of supreme efficacy upon those who believe. Herein lies the supreme power and glory attained by Christ through His Ascension into Heaven.

"The Lord's body," raised not only to heaven, but to "the heaven of heavens," "above all authority and dominion, name and dignity," which is called by Isaiah "God's mountain and God's house established on the peak of all mountains,"[55] dwells at the same time in the most profound intimacy of those who believe and is made evident in the intimacy of those purified of passions, as a "place" through which and from which springs all of our power for sanctification and deification. This paradoxical coincidence between the divine throne and our intimacy is due to the fact that the Lord's very own body sits on the divine throne.

The Christian West has distanced itself from understanding the Lord's Ascension with the body to the supreme power and glory as an Ascension to the supreme efficacy of Christ's body through its concomitant dwelling in us. In the Western understanding, Christ has become through the Ascension a Master, a remote Lord, who forgives on the basis of the power to forgive obtained through His sacrifice, assuring us happiness in the life to come. Catholicism was thus able to give Christ a replacement in the Church, whereas Protestantism lets every person have his "freedom" outside Christ's work in human beings; this is a false freedom because it still has arrogance and passions. Only freedom in Christ according to the image of His freedom as liberation from passions and arrogance—which means union with the same Christ and having Christ's image imprinted upon all those who believe in Him—is in conformity with the unity of all in faith and understanding, so that all are present within the same love of God, which nourishes their love for Him and for one another. For early Christianity, as it has been preserved in Orthodoxy, the Ascension of Christ's body into heaven is our own ascension, the ascension from our passions in unity with Him; it is the ascension begun for us through the Lord's Ascension, to be continued until its perfection. "That is why we rejoice by celebrating the Resurrection, the Ascension and the placing of our nature (in a supreme place) as well as the beginning of the resurrection and ascension of all who believe. We all partake and will partake of our Savior's Resurrection and Ascension."[56] Undoubtedly, our intimacy, or that of the Church, in which Christ dwells after the Ascension, is not in itself "the throne" where the Father and the Son are. The Father and the Son are always above our intimacy so that they may come to us from there. The Father and the Son "come" through the Holy Spirit in our intimacy, or they come in an increasingly greater measure, or they may not come; our heart is not the ultimate place from which the presence of the Father and of the Son spring up. The divine throne is the supreme level of existence, a level of supreme transcendence, or the ultimate and infinite source and foundation where all things have their beginning and cause. It is also there that the state of supreme pneumatization of Christ's body is to be found, and that pneumatization coincides with the full communion of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, the "coming" of Christ and of the Father from their throne to our intimacy does not represent their movement from one place to another, but only their permeation—or that of the supreme foundation and source of existence—in us, which is the same with our placement in direct contact with this living foundation or infinite source of existence, without this living and infinite foundation of existence ceasing to be different from us.

Eastern Christianity, by placing so much emphasis on the presence of Christ and the Father through the Holy Spirit in the intimate being of the faithful, affirms their immeasurable efficacy—that of the Holy Trinity—in the believers even in this life if they strive for their purification from sins and passions, which keep them closed in on themselves. By this the believers are kept in unity and are led on the path of holiness in the likeness of the holiness of Christ's body, whose state of ultimate pneumatization is a state from which the Holy Spirit irradiates, being in His fullness in this perfectly transparent body.

The result of this work of Christ in the believers' hearts through the Holy Spirit is the Church; in other words, Christ's work bears fruit as Church. This work cannot be separated from the Church.

NOTES

Chapter One: The Word of God in Creation and in the Old Testament

1. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* (PG 91:1285).

2. Karl Rahner, "Grundlinien einer systematischen Christologie," in Karl Rahner and Wilhem Thüsing, *Christologie systematisch und exegetisch* (Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1972), 62–63.

3. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* (PG 91:1280–81; 1289; 1305–21; 1129; 1149–51, etc).

4. George C. Berthold, "Chapters on Knowledge," in *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 153–54.

5. Ibid., 145. (Here St. Maximus follows St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* [PG 44:381A].)

6. Ibid., 154.

7. Ibid., 145.

8. Ibid., 147.

9. Ibid., 141.

10. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, translated from the Greek by Carmino J. de Catanzaro (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 190.

11. Ibid., 96.

12. Panagiotis Nellas, Ἡ δικαίωσις τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν Χριστῷ, 69.

13. Ibid.

Chapter Two: The Gospel Image of Jesus Christ: God and Man

1. Wilhelm Bruening, "Wer ist Jesus Christus? Entwurf einer Christologie," in Johannes Hüttenbügel, *Gott, Mensch, Universum* (Cologne, Germany: Styria, 1974), 581.

2. Ibid., 584.

3. Ibid., 587.

4. Ibid., 603.

5. Ibid., 606.

6. Ibid., 608.

7. In Karl Rahner and Wilhelm Thüsing, *Christologie*, 130.

8. Wilhelm Bruening, "Wer ist Jesus Christus?" 616.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., 619.

11. Cf. Bruening, "Wer ist Jesus Christus?" 628.

12. Maximus the Confessor, *Second Letter to John the Cubicularius* (PG 91:390d).

13. Wolfgang Beinert, *Christus und der Kosmos: Perspektiven zu einer Theologie der Schöpfung* (Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1974), 17.

14. Ibid., 29.

15. Ibid., 66.

Chapter Three: The Person of the Incarnate Lord in the Faith of the Church

1. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 104. (Cf. PG 150:572a.)

2. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adversus argumenta Severi* (PG 180b:1945): "The hypostasis does not simply or directly show the fullness (of nature), but the self state (that which exists by itself, τὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸ); only indirectly does it show the fullness."

3. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adv. arg. Sev.*: "The qualities seen in the reason of the hypostasis make every one as a 'who' out of many (τινὰ από τινων ἕκαστον ποιεῖ); and seen in the reason of nature, they do not make someone exist, but something out of something." Idem, *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* (PG 86a:1280ab): "The essence shows us the reason of what is, and the hypostasis and the reason shows us what is of itself. The essence shows us the reason of the species [and the species does not exist in and of itself, but in individuals—author's note] and the hypostasis indicates someone."

4. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adversus Nestorianos*, book 4 (PG 86a:1716d): "For His Hypostasis, understood as being also God the Word by nature, has a second beginning and is no longer thought of as simple and of one nature among the divine Persons, but as complex and of two natures as that of Christ or of the Word incarnate in human form." St. Maximus also says that Christ's Hypostasis is "complex," which does not hinder Him from being one: "Being simple and immaterial, out of economy He became for us complex and incarnate after Hypostasis" (*Epist.* 14 [PG 91:589c]).

5. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adv. Nest.*, book 6 (PG 86a:1748): "By assuming the body in His own Hypostasis, He personalized it (ἐπροσωποποίησεν). For the reasons of the body's essence are not in the nature of the Word. In addition to the fact that the Godhead has its own divine characteristics, it

assumes in a certain manner the natural characteristics of the body. One of the natures was deified as divine nature, and the other was deified as being passable of deification. One was raised, the other was not. One gave of its own, the other has received the natural gifts. The Personal unity does not diminish in any way the distinctiveness of natures." The very fact that one gives and the other receives shows that the two parts are personalized as a unique Person and distinct at the same time.

6. Maximus the Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho* (PG 91:292d).

7. Idem, *Opuscula theologica et polemica* (PG 91:80).

8. Ibid., PG 91:77.

9. Ibid., PG 91:61.

10. *On Guarding the Five Senses* (Volos, Greece: Ekdoseis S. N. Schoina, 1958), 207. In Panagiotis Nellas, Ἡ δικαίωσις τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν Χριστῷ, 68.

11. Leontius of Byzantium, ibid. (PG 86a:1138).

12. Idem, *Contra Nest. et. Eutych*. (PG 86a:1295c).

13. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*.

14. Ibid., 130.

15. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adv. arg. Sev.* (PG 86a:1927c).

16. *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, in vol. 14 of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, edited by Philip Schaff. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 313.

17. Ibid.

18. Leontius of Byzantium, *De sectis* 1 (PG 86a:1197c).

19. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 123; see also PG 150:593c.

20. In Nellas, Ἡ δικαίωσις τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν Χριστῷ, 149.

21. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 138; see also PG 150:612d–13a.

22. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 186.

23. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adv. Nest.*, book 5 (PG 86a:1741d).

24. Ibid., PG 86a:1741c.

25. Nellas, Ἡ δικαίωσις τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν Χριστῷ, 139.

Chapter Four: The Saving Power of the Incarnate Word

1. Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc. theol. et polem*. (PG 91:105b).

2. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adv. Nest.*, book 4 (PG 86a:1581d, 1584a).

3. Idem, *Contra Nest. et Eutych.* (PG 86a:1289).

4. Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc theol. et polem.* (PG 91:117b).

5. Ibid., PG 91:120a.

6. Ibid., PG 91:108.

7. Ibid., PG 91:102–104.

8. *Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 345.

9. Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc. theol. et polem*. (PG 91:108b).

10. Leontius of Byzantium, *Contra Nestor. et Eutych*. (PG 86a:1324c).

11. Cyril of Alexandria, *Apology for the 12 Chapters to the Oriental Bishops* (PG 76:29ff.).

12. Leontius of Byzantium, *Contra Nestor. et Eutych.* (PG 86a:1285b).

13. Cyril of Alexandria, *Response to the Combating of Anathemas*, anat. 12.

14. Ibid., anat. 11.

15. Maximus the Confessor, *Epist.* 16 (PG 91:577).

16. Leontius of Byzantium, *Contra Nestor. et Eutych.* (PG 86a:1321d).

17. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism*, in vol. 5 of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 494.

18. Maximus the Confessor, *Second Epistle to John the Cubicularius* (PG 91:207).

19. Idem, *The 19th Epistle to Pyrrhus* (PG 91:592d).

20. Idem, *The 13th Epistle* (PG 91:532b).

21. Ibid., PG 91:509–512.

22. Concerning the *kenosis*, Karl Barth offers the following reflections, which Hans Urs von Balthasar also adopted. They confirm the Chalcedonian Christology, both of them considering that in His descent God does not divest himself of His divinity, but confirms it: "The humiliation, therefore, is the humiliation of God, the exaltation the exaltation of man: the humiliation of God to supreme glory, as the activation and demonstration of His divine being; and the exaltation of man as the work of God's grace which consists in the restoration of his true humanity . . . For who is the God who is present and active in Him? He is the One who, concretely in His being as man, activates and reveals Himself as divinely free, as the One who loves in His freedom" (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 4, pt. 1, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980], 134). "And He shows Himself to be more great and rich and sovereign than we had ever imagined" (ibid., 186).

The French philosopher Alain places an emphasis on the spirit as opposed to power through freedom: "Look again at the child, this weak creature of God. This weak creature that is in need of all, is God . . . The child pays nothing" (in Balthasar, *Le Mystère Pascal*, 611). There is another power at work here. It is the power of Him who gives up everything, of Him who offers himself up, of Him who gives up all power in front of others without asking for anything in return. It is precisely in this way that He obliges more than through any request or compulsion.

23. Maximus the Confessor, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho* (PG 91:297–309).

24. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adv. Nest.* (PG 86a:1705).

25. In one of his twelve anathemas against Nestorius, St. Cyril says, "If anyone will not confess that the Emmanuel is very God, and that therefore the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God, inasmuch as in the flesh she bore the Word of God made flesh (as it is written, 'The Word was made flesh'): let him be anathema" (*Seven Ecumenical Councils*). These anathemas were included in the decisions of the Third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus.

26. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adv. Nest.* (PG 86a:1649–1722).

27. Gregory of Nazianzus, *The 101st Epistle to Caledonius, Against Apollinarius*.

28. It is in this that Karl Barth sees the significance of the Son of God's birth as man from the Virgin. "The Virgin birth denotes particularly the mystery of revelation. It denotes the fact that God stands at the start where real revelation takes place—God and not the arbitrary cleverness, capability, or piety of man" (Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, pt. 2, trans. G. T. Thomson, Harold Knight [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980], 182).

29. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adv. Nest.*, book 6 (PG 86a:1669b).

30. Ibid., PG 86a:1709.

31. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* (PG 91:1341).

32. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adv. Nest.*, book 6 (PG 86a:1343a).

33. Ibid., PG 86a:1720d.

34. Nicolas Cabasilas, in Panagiotis Nellas, ed., *The Mother of God: Three Orations on the Mother of God*, 2nd ed. (Athens: Ekdoseis Apostolikes Diakonias, 1974), 62, 64, 66. First printed 1969.

35. Ibid., 180.

36. Ibid., 102, 62.

37. Ibid., 124.

38. Ibid., 184.

39. Ibid., 86–88.

40. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adv. Nest.*, book 6 (PG 86a:1717–20).

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., 1724.

43. Maximus the Confessor, *Opusc. theol. et polem.* (PG 91:157).

44. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adv. Nest.*, book 5 (PG 86a:1737c).

45. Ibid., PG 86a:1728.

46. Ibid.

47. This doctrine on Christ's impeccability was dealt with at length in our book, *Jesus Christ or the Restoration of Man* (Sibiu, 1944), 157–76.

48. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 58.

49. Ibid.

50. Gregory the Theologian, *Oration 38 on the Theophany* (PG 36:324). Methodius of Olimpus, *The Banquet* 9.2 (PG 18:181b).

51. Nellas, Ἡ δικαίωσις τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν Χριστῷ, 100.

52. Ibid.

53. St. Maximus the Confessor says that in His agony in Gethsemane, Jesus let His human nature be "deprived of His operation to show its weakness and to prove its reality. At other times He covers it to show that He was not a simple man" (*Opusc. theol. et pol.* [PG 91:164]). But not even then was the human will entirely deprived of a certain power of the Word as its Hypostasis. For it would never have opposed God, who wanted it to accept death in order to conquer death. St. Maximus means that the Word gave it only enough power to have the latitude to fight in order to maintain itself in accord with God's will.

54. We should mention that the corruptibility of Christ's body has never been realized, being stopped by the Holy Spirit. Leontius of Byzantium says, "The fact that He died belongs to us and to our mortality. The fact that His

body did not deteriorate was due to the power of the Word, who hindered its experience by not allowing the body to deteriorate" (*Contra Nestor. et Eutych.* [PG 86a:1348]).

55. Maximus the Confessor, *Epist.* 15 (PG 91:524).
56. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adv. Nest.*, book 3 (PG 86a:1609c).
57. Ibid., book 7 (PG 86a:1767).

Chapter Five: The One Work of Salvation: Jesus as Prophet and Teacher

1. Justin Popovich, *O anthropos kai o theanthropos* (Athens, 1968), 115; in P. Nellas, Ἡ δικαίωσις τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν Χριστῷ, 26.
2. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* (PG 91:1145d).
3. Karl Rahner, "Grundlinien einer systematischen Christologie," 32.
4. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra* (PG 69:89).
5. Ibid., PG 69:88.
6. Ibid., PG 69:241.
7. Ibid., PG 69:509.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., PG 69:508ab.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* (PG 91:1165d).
13. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra* (PG 69:497).
14. Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus* (PG 75:589c).
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., PG 75:584.
17. Ibid., PG 75:580.
18. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* (PG 91:1129, 1280–81, 1289, 1305–1321).

Chapter Six: The One Work of Salvation: Jesus as High Priest and Supreme Sacrifice

1. Nicholas Cabasilas in *The Mother of God*, ed. Panagiotis Nellas, 180.
2. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 118.
3. Panagiotis Nellas, Ἡ δικαίωσις τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν Χριστῷ, 106.
4. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyrorum in Genesim*, book 2 (PG 69:100b).
5. Ibid., PG 69:73a.
6. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adv. Nest.*, book 5 (PG 86a:1729).
7. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra* (PG 69:100).
8. E. Riggenbach, *Das Geheimnis des Kreuzes Christi* (Stuttgart und Basel), 16, in Hans Urs von Balthasar, Le Mystere Pascal (Paris: Ed. du Cerf, 1972), 135.
9. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism*, 489.
10. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra* (PG 69:542).
11. Ibid., PG 69:509.

12. Ibid., PG 69:437.

13. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism*, 489.

14. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Le Mystère Pascal* (Paris: Ed. du Cerf, 1972), 49.

15. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyrorum in Genesim*, book 4 (PG 69:220b).

16. Wilhelm Thüsing, "Neutestamentliche Zugangswege zu einer transzedental-dialogischen Christologie," in Karl Rahner and Wilhelm Thüsing, *Christologie systematisch und exegetisch*, 130.

17. Karl Rahner, "Grundlinien einer systematischen Christologie," 37.

18. Thüsing, "Neutestamentliche Zugangswege," 128.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., 131.

Chapter Seven: The One Work of Salvation: Jesus as Risen Lord and King

1. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra* (PG 69:585b): "Aaron's proper clothing and his countenance as high priest foreshadowed the beauty of Christ's royal dignity and priesthood."

2. Ibid., PG 69:476.

3. Berthold Klappert, *Diskussion um Kreuz und Auferstehung* (Wuppertal: Aussaat Verlag, 1971).

4. Ibid., 10.

5. Olivier Clement offers valuable reflections in this regard in *Le Christ, terre des vivants, Spiritualité orientale*, no. 7 (Bégrolles-en-Mauges, France: Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1976).

6. Ulrich Wilckens, "Ursprung der Überlieferung der Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen. Zur traditionsgeschichtlichen Analyse von I Kor. 15:1–11," in *Dogma und Denkstrukturen,* edited by W. Joest and W. Pannenberg (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 74n48. In Berthold Klappert, *Diskussion*, 14n16.

7. Rengstorf, Karl Heinrich, "*Die Auferstehung Jesu. Form, Art und Sinn der urchristlichen Osterbotschaft*" (Witten: Luther Verlag, 1960), 88, in Berthold Klappert, *Diskussion*, 15n20.

8. Berthold Klappert, *Diskussion*, 14–15.

9. Rev. Stefan Charalambidis, "La résurrection. Donées scripturaires et interpretation," in *Contacts* 78–79 (1972), 102.

10. Ernst Troeltsch, *Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie*, first printed 1898. In Klappert, *Diskussion*, 17.

11. H. Grass, *Ostergeschen und Osterberichte*, 12, in Klappert, *Diskussion*, 18–19.

12. H. v. Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Ostererreignisse und das leere Grab* (Heidelberg, 1961), 7, in Klappert, *Diskussion*, 19.

13. Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Dogmatische Thesen zur Lehre von der Offenbarung," in *Offenbarung als Geschichte*, Pannenberg, ed. (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 98.

14. In Klappert, *Diskussion*, 22.

15. Ibid.

16. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 4, pt. 1, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980), 313.

17. Ibid., 309.

18. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Le Mystère Pascal*, 198.

19. Ibid., 178.

20. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra* (PG 69:365b).

21. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Le Mystère Pascal*, 205ff.

22. Leontius of Byzantium says, "Because His body was of the same nature with the bodies of other persons, as it died it could just as well suffer decay, too. The fact that it did not decay does not show the change of nature, but the active power of the divine will, as walking on the water is not an indication of the body's nature, but a sign of the Godhead" (*Contra Nest. et Eutych.* [PG 86b:1341d]).

23. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra* (PG 69:544a).

24. Leontius of Byzantium, *Contra Nest. et Eutych.* (PG 86b:1341c).

25. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra* (PG 69:95).

26. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Le Mystère Pascal*, 174.

27. Ibid.

28. H. Schlier, *La résurrection de Jésus Christ* (Paris:Éditions Salvator, 1969), 43, in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Le Mystère Pascal*, 213.

29. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Le Mystère Pascal*, 213, 221.

30. Ibid.

31. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra* (PG 69:416).

32. Ibid., PG 69:549b.

33. Ibid., PG 69:560d.

34. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 164.

35. Cyril of Alexandria, Adoratio in Spiritu et Veritatae, book 15 (PG 68:973).

36. Ibid., PG 68:517c.

37. Ibid., PG 68:507c.

38. Ibid., PG 68:332d.

39. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra* (PG 69:425a).

40. Ibid., PG 69:437b.

41. Ibid., PG 69:242a.

42. Ibid., PG 69:240.

43. Ibid., PG 69:233d.

44. Ibid., PG 69:172.

45. Ibid., PG 69:172b.

46. Ibid., PG 69:517a.

47. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adv. Nest.*, book 5 (PG 86a:1774d–75a).

48. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra* (PG 69:429).

49. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Le Mystère Pascal*, 242–43.

50. Joseph Ratzinger, *Himmelfahrt Christi*, in Herders Theologisches Taschenlexikon, vol. 3 (Freiburg, Germany: Herders, 1972), 290–92.

51. This pneumatization makes Christ "Spirit" according to humanity, as Odo Casel puts it, although he attributes this effect only to Christ's death and Resurrection. Surely, this state of Spirit does not mean the abandonment of the body. "Through His passions the Lord became Spirit; therefore we, too, must experience the Passion mystically together with Him . . . Christ is Spirit through the hypostatic union with the divine Logos, who is Spirit; but this union produces its full effect (*wirkt sich aus*) in raising the nature, too, which was fulfilled and became fully evident through Resurrection. For the Lord first came in the humility of the bodily sin. It was this that He had to nail on the cross, so that in it He might destroy sin and together with it death. At the same moment, however, in which sin was destroyed on the cross, Jesus the servant, the humiliated Son of Man, the whole God-Man, is now Spirit" (*Das christliche Kultmysterium*, 2nd ed. [Regensburg, Germany: F. Pustet, 1935], 34, 37ff.).

52. Gregory Palamas, *Oration 22 on the Ascension of the Lord* (PG 151:296c).

53. Idem, *Oration 21 on the Ascension of the Lord* (PG 151:280d).

54. Idem, *Oration 22 on the Ascension of the Lord* (PG 151:296c).

55. Idem, *Oration 21 on the Ascension of the Lord* (PG 151:276).

56. Ibid., PG 151:277d.